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# From Daimon to Demon: The Evolution of the Demon from Antiquity to Early Christianity

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FROM DAIMON TO DEMON: THE EVOLUTION OF THE DEMON  
FROM ANTIQUITY TO EARLY CHRISTIANITY

By

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Bachelor of Arts  
University of Nevada Las Vegas  
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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
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## ABSTRACT

### FROM DAIMON TO DEMON: THE EVOLUTION OF THE DEMON FROM ANTIQUITY TO EARLY CHRISTIANITY

One of the most fascinating entities of religious thought is the demon, which is still pervasive in both religious and popular culture today. The demon is something that is present not just in various religious texts, but is also a staple of the modern horror film. The question at hand in this thesis is whether or not the demon was always considered to be synonymous with evil. The demon itself has existed in religious culture and magic practice since antiquity, but most scholars tend to either ignore the entity, or conflate it with ghosts or minor gods. This thesis traces the evolution that the daimon takes to eventually become the demon we know today. At the same time, it postulates that the most important change to take place occurred with Augustine of Hippo's *The City of God*, which ultimately gives the demon the negative characteristics that it still has today. This is the first time that this has been posited, as most historians have previously said that the point in which the daimon becomes demon is with the writing of Xenocrates in the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.

By looking at both the literature of the Greek and Roman worlds, spells and incantations that were used in antiquity, and also texts relating to Judaism and Christianity, there is a sense that the evolution culminates in the work of Augustine, and that this is the most momentous change for the entity. This is significant, as it illustrates the influence of Christianity on the religious cultures of antiquity, and how monotheism played a large role in the evolution of the demon. As the demon is something that is prevalent still today, not only in our own popular culture but also in religious realms as well, it is important to understand the background and history of the entity, and not merely hold the assumption that it did not “exist” prior to Christianity.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

When one hears the word demon, it is difficult not to bring to mind images of grotesque, damned creatures; the kind that could only be found in the deepest recesses of the underworld, or the Christian Hell. These images still resonate today not only in religion, but in popular culture as well. In both, demons are seen as something to be feared. The image of the demon holds deeply religious connotations, but the idea itself invokes fear in many individuals, regardless of faith. The demon in today's popular culture is an important staple of the horror film. Movies from *The Exorcist* to *Hellraiser* depict evil forces of demons that are "hell-bent" on the destruction of the "good" in the world. It is hard to extricate the idea of the demon from its now evil connotations, but was this entity always considered to be malicious? Upon looking at sources from antiquity, it seems that this is not the case. The evolution that culminated in the demon that we know today occurred over a great deal of time, and had its swiftest change with the emergence of early monotheistic religion, especially Christianity.

In antiquity, the entity known today as the demon was called a *daemon* or *daimon*. Throughout this thesis, it will be referred to as a *daimon*. This simply meant that it was a lesser being, not quite equal to those in the ancient pantheons. E.R. Dodds, in *The Greeks and the Irrational*, writes that there were three distinct categories of the daimon. The first category was that of "those irrational impulses which arise in a man against his will to tempt him."<sup>1</sup> Within this category would fit, for example, the thoughts of Theognis, a Greek poet who saw the feelings of hope and fear as dangerous daimones. Thus, he

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<sup>1</sup> E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 41

shows the daimon as an almost personification of emotions. This seems to be akin to other spiritual forces of ancient religion which shall be seen later. Dodds' second category encompasses "daemons projected by a particular human situation."<sup>2</sup> In this case, the daimon could represent things such as pestilence, famine, or drought. These were things that had a profound and negative effect upon the people themselves, but could not be explained. Therefore, they would be attributed to the "gods", and in these cases, minor ones. The daimon was thought to be of a more chthonic, or earthly, nature and while strict forms of dualism - an extreme good versus an extreme evil - were not quite present in early antiquity, the daimon had both positive and negative influence. Just as the ancient gods could hold human qualities, so too could the daimon. The final category, which plays a larger role in the history of the daimon, is that of the daimon who is "attached to a particular individual, usually from birth, and determines, wholly or in part, his individual destiny."<sup>3</sup> This category itself represents a great deal of what the daimon was thought to be in earlier periods, and can still be seen in later versions of the entity. It is reminiscent of the Christian idea of the "guardian angel", which may stem from these original Greek ideas, as the daimon would eventually split into good and evil, angel and demon, with the rise of monotheistic religion.

The daimon itself is an entity with a rather convoluted history. As noted above, the daimon undergoes an evolution over from antiquity to the emergence of early Christianity; however the daimon is not limited to just those three categories. While this evolution has been chronicled by some, many historians have simply just mentioned the daimon in passing, or have even conflated its existence with that of ghosts or *theoi*, minor

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 41

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 41

gods themselves. This is a problem, because even if the distinction between daimones and ghosts, or daimones and minor gods was not something entirely clear in earlier periods of antiquity, the daimon *does* become acknowledged as an entity in its own right, which had major influence on the way it would subsequently be thought of after Christianity's influence. If the evolution of the daimon *is* recounted by historians, the task at hand for them is to pinpoint the change in the daimon that made it the *demon* that we know today. This is important because the demon plays a very significant role in the religious culture of medieval Europe. The conclusion of most scholars is that the most momentous change to the daimon came in the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E with the ideologies of Plato and Xenocrates. This thesis disagrees with that conclusion because, as will be discussed later, while the postulations of Plato and Xenocrates *do* change the daimon, it just becomes a more *human* entity. This thesis argues that, in fact, the most significant points of change to the daimon actually occurred with the rise of monotheism, especially Christianity, and culminate in the opinions of Augustine of Hippo.

Much of what can be discovered about the daimon in the ancient world comes from the spells and incantations used in magical and religious practices. However, the lines between magic and religion were, and are, often quite blurred. These distinctions have a significant role in defining the nature of the entity. The ambiguity between what was considered magic and religion are especially prevalent in antiquity, and continue on through early Christianity. One group's religion could be considered magic to another. The introduction to the text *Between Magic and Religion* says that "in the Greek and Roman worlds, 'magic'...is the name given to a collection of practices that are in conflict



with the rules of the larger society.”<sup>4</sup> It also says, however, that “it is at times difficult to distinguish ‘magical’ aspects from what was considered acceptable religious practice.”<sup>5</sup> Of course, these concepts of magic and religion differ depending upon the deciding group. Therefore, when considering ancient magic and religion, it must be done so without using the modern connotations of those terms, as difficult as that may be. That which may be considered an issue of semantics today held real implications for those of the ancient world. The idea that magic and religion are not, always, clearly distinct is important when looking at the periods of change not only in the context of the ancient world, but also in the evolution of the daimon. The daimon was an entity that had the ability to transcend both of these categories, and as those categories became more distinct this would affect the way that the daimon was seen.

The evolution of the daimon took place over a long period of time, and through the writing of some, as well as the spells, incantations, and curses of others, one can see how this came to be. Through the archaic, classical, and Hellenistic periods of the ancient world, and through the early periods of Christianity, the literature and writing show deep transformations. The first chapter of this thesis discusses the importance of the two terms “magic” and “religion”. It shows the various approaches that historians of this period have taken to discern between the two, and looks at how and why the peoples of these periods took to finding distinctions. From there, it moves into looking at examples of the daimon in ancient Greece and Rome, and how the entity shifted over time.

The second chapter illustrates the daimon in action. It uses primary source material to show how the daimon was used in magic, whether from spells, incantations,

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<sup>4</sup> Introduction to *Between Magic and Religion*, ed. Sulochana R. Asirvatham, Corinne Ondine Pache, and John Watrous (New York: Rowman & Littlefields Publishers, Inc. 2001), xi

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, xi

or curses. By looking at these sources, one can gain a better understanding of the ancient daimon. The third and final chapter discusses the daimon in other ancient cultures, as well as the importance it had to the Old and New Testaments. It is during the period that this chapter covers in which the daimon undergoes what I argue is its most drastic transformation. This looks at how both Jewish and early Christian religious culture truly “demonized” the ancient entity, so to speak. By giving a more full exploration of the evolution of the daimon, this thesis aims to show that while there were significant changes to the daimon in the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E, it was the rising influence of Christianity culminating in the statements by Augustine of Hippo that had the most lasting impact on “damning” the daimon.

## Chapter 2. Magic, Religion, and a Short History of the Daimon

### Magic and Religion

The functions of the daimon in antiquity only make sense when put in relation to the pervasive nature of magic. The definitions of these two terms were very often, and sometimes still are, very blurred. To modern scholars, when looking at the past, it might even be only an issue of semantics. In some cases, these two categories were rather fluid, and what one might today (or even during the rise of early Christianity) think of as magic, could have been an integral part of religion and vice versa. Georg Luck, in his *Arcana Mundi*, says that there have been a great number of approaches and attempts to discern these two categories and make them distinct.<sup>6</sup> He shows, however, that more often than not, the two have the same concerns. This chapter discusses some of the varying definitions of “magic” and “religion” and why they are important to the understanding the changes that occurred to the daimon. From there, it shows what implications these terms would have had in the ancient world, and then gives a brief overview of the daimon. In order to gain fuller comprehension of the history of the daimon, one must first understand what the terms “magic” and “religion” connote in discourse today, as well as what the distinctions may or may not have been in antiquity.

Luck utilizes the historian Lynn Thorndike’s definition of magic, saying that it “includes ‘all occult arts and sciences, superstitions and folklore,’” but subsequently backtracks by adding that this is not at all a “satisfactory definition”.<sup>7</sup> He also brings in the definitions of others that have had great influence on the history of magic. Luck

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<sup>6</sup> Georg Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 5-7

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 33

summarizes these definitions briefly: “(1) that magic becomes religion (K.T. Preuss); (2) that religion attempts to reconcile personal powers that magic has failed (Sir James Frazer); (3) that religion and magic have common roots (R.R. Marrett); and (4) that magic is a degenerate form of religion (P. Wilhelm Schmidt).”<sup>8</sup> Many, however, have postulated that the most important difference between magic and religion (to individuals in their respective times) pertains to action: passive versus active. In a religion, one might attempt to achieve an end through supplication, submitting to a certain deity. Magic, on the other hand, might attempt to gain something through the magician’s own knowledge or power. This is a very simplified explanation, and is still problematic, as again these categories are most definitely not rigid, but it is helpful for understanding the uses of the daimon.

As Fritz Graf says in *Magic in the Ancient World*, “the contemporaries of Plato and Socrates placed voodoo dolls on graves and thresholds...Cicero smiled upon a colleague who said that he had lost his memory under the influence of a spell, and the Elder Pliny declared that everybody was afraid to fall victim to binding spells.”<sup>9</sup> Thus this shows that magic was not necessarily some arcane thing inaccessible to most, but was present in everyday life. Graf also gives his own definitions of magic and religion by saying that while “both magic and religion admit the existence of supernatural powers”, religion “is distinguished from magic by the absence of rationality and a practical goal” and that it “differs particularly in that the religious person humbly submits to supernatural powers, whereas the magician tries to bend these powers to his own will and interests.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid,34

<sup>9</sup> Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 1

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 14

There are those, also, who believe that the term “magic” is an outdated analytical category and negative in connotation and therefore ought to be removed from descriptive language in academic discourse. Such is the view of John Middleton, who said that “if magic is a subjective notion...then it can have little or no meaning in cross-cultural analysis or understanding. The concept of magic is in itself empty of meaning and thus susceptible to the recognition of any meaning we care to give it.”<sup>11</sup> John G. Gager in his *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* says that the fact that there are incantations calling upon both chthonic deities and daimones means that there is “no hope for a satisfactory differentiation between ‘religion’ and ‘magic’.”<sup>12</sup>

Graf also acknowledges that even today magic is something that seems to be “taken as a human universal.”<sup>13</sup> The meaning of this being that the term “magic” was one that had an ethnocentric background; it was a descriptor that had been passed down through religious teaching in reference to those engaging in non-Western forms of spiritual tradition. That being said, the word from which “magic” derives, *magos*, was prevalent as a descriptive term as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, and continuing in use throughout the classical era. *Magos* itself is a word from the “religious language of Persia, where the *magos* is a priest or religious specialist.”<sup>14</sup> In this case, however, the use of the word itself, and the act of performing *mageia*, came out of the need for the descriptive language to designate “certain ritual and ideological attachments as foreign,

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<sup>11</sup> John Middleton, “Theories of Magic,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, M Eliade, ed., (New York: Macmillan, 1987)

<sup>12</sup> John G. Gager ed. *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 101

<sup>13</sup> Fritz Graf, “Excluding the Charming: The Development of the Greek Concept of Magic” in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. Marvin Meyer, Paul Mirecki, (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001) 29

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 30

unwanted, and dangerous, from inside Greek (or Athenian) religion, not from outside it.”<sup>15</sup>

While it may seem like an issue of semantics today, that magic and religion were very similar and that the question may have been more of *who* rather than *what*. One group’s religion could be considered magic by another. However, when looking at the history of the daimon, we must remember that these categories would have been distinct to those practicing in the ancient world. The daimon is an entity that at times transcends these categories, and when it finally stays firmly in the realm of magic – although it would still be *very* present in religious discourse- that is when the daimon’s nature begins to change the most significantly. When magic and religion become more firmly divided, there becomes a greater sense of the daimon as demon.

According to Graf, the need to differentiate between magic and civic religion came out of the development of philosophical discourse and scientific medicine in Archaic Greece.<sup>16</sup> In Rome, however, this change is not so easily uncovered. The terms evolved from *magos* and *mageia* to *magus* and *magia* in Latin, but this term did not enter the Latin lexicon until relatively late.<sup>17</sup> Republican Rome, just like Archaic Greece, did not originally differentiate between magic and civic religion and medicine, but eventually it became recognized and thus marginalized. This may have happened due to the influence of Greek thinking, which led to the effective use of witchcraft accusations;

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 36

<sup>16</sup> Graf says that this change begins to occur in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, and that the opposition to magic did not have anything to do with civic religion. It is not the Frazerian dichotomy of magic and religion that is occurring here, but that of magic and science. Graf, 40

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 39

thus, the way was perhaps potentially paved for the context in which we tend to use the word “magic” today.<sup>18</sup>

Solomon Nigosian, in his *Magic and Divination in the Old Testament*, says that “The practice of magic is so ancient, widespread, and in various forms that no single definition will ever be uncontested.”<sup>19</sup> Nigosian’s work in fact shows that the practices of the ancient Israelites were very much akin to what they considered magic in other cultures, for example, the act of cleromancy. In the Old and New Testament, cleromancy, or the practice of casting lots, was a popular mode of decision making. It appears in Isaiah 34:17, in which case even the Jewish God himself was doing so, “He [YHWH] has cast for them a lot; And his hand has divided for them by line;...”<sup>20</sup> Nigosian says that this was an accepted practice from allotting land to finding out which “tribe was divinely decreed to go and avenge the Benjaminites for their mass raping of the Levite’s concubine.”<sup>21</sup> These two examples show the broad ends of the spectrum for the use of cleromancy, but that is what makes them significant; this type of “magical” practice was approved and used even by the Jewish God himself. Cleromancy, or casting lots was a tool that could be used by the ancient Israelites, but in another culture could be considered “magic” and “other”.

What this example shows, then, is the pervasive nature of “magic” in the ancient world. It also illustrates that there was a definite need for those in the ancient world to have definitions of what was accepted, and what was not. The fact that the ancient Israelites participated in what could be considered magical acts, but chose to keep them

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 42

<sup>19</sup> Solomon Nigosian, *Magic and Divination in the Old Testament*, (Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2008), 17

<sup>20</sup> Isaiah 34:17, New International Version

<sup>21</sup> Nigosian, 51

under the umbrella of religious practice is of great significance. While again this would support an argument for mere issues of word choice (magical v. religious practices), it illustrates the importance of distinction between practices in the ancient world. These distinctions would play an important role in the evolving history of the daimon.

### **Magic and Public and Private Religious Practices**

Closely related to the differences between magic and religion to the cultures of ancient Greece and Rome are distinctions between public and private religious practice. Just as religion and magic were distinct, so too was how one participated in a public religious context and what religious rites one performed in private. Public religious practice consisted of various festivals in both ancient Greece and Rome, where there would be games, sacrifices, feasting, and such. Private religion involved the sorts of rites and rituals performed in one's home – whether performed for a household deity, or something performed in secret that would be considered magic - or it could mean participation in a mystery cult. Again, these distinctions come back to the ideas of something performed as a group, or rites performed in a more solitary fashion.

Public religious practice was central to ancient Greek and Roman cultures, and was an accepted form of religious expression. These religious practices were a part of daily life, and the ancient calendars that dictated to various cities and tribes revolved around them. The festivals that made up the calendars were definite, accepted practice, and each one was tied to a certain god or myth, and would consist of things from sacrifices, contests, dancing, and processions.<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, however, not all Greek townships, or *demes*, would celebrate the same festivals, or in the same way. While

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<sup>22</sup> Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 227



locations might celebrate a festival for the same deity, it would reflect something from *that* township. For example, how Artemis Ephesia of Ephesus was represented and/or celebrated would have been different from that of Artemis Brauronia of Brauron; the epithets attached to the Homeric name would thus show the difference of the representation of the god/goddess of that *deme*.<sup>23</sup>

Private religious practice, conversely, was something that could both be performed in a solitary manner, or in what is known as a mystery cult. Not *all* private worship was looked down upon; in fact there were certain private religious traditions that were deemed necessary: appeasing household gods, praying to local deities etc. This is a topic that will be discussed again later with the appearance of the *Agathos Daimon*, which was seen as a Good Spirit, or guardian of the home.

There were, of course, private religious practices that were synonymous with secrecy, and were not necessarily associated with the public, civic religion of the polis but they were supplemental. These were the mystery cults, which were named as such due to their secret nature. They required certain things of their adherents, including various rites of initiation. In Greece, the secrecy of these mysteries was something that was imperative to their existence, and to divulge any information could result in severe repercussions. In the Roman Empire, however, this could be different depending upon the mystery cult itself.

According to Sarah Iles Johnston there are four categories that classify a practice or order as a mystery cult. The first would be that “mystery cults demanded secrecy”, in that those who had been initiated were forbidden from saying anything about the

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<sup>23</sup> Jon Mikalson, “Greece” from *Ancient Religion*, ed. Sarah Iles Johnston, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 215

practices themselves. The second part is that “Mystery cults promised to improve initiates’ situations in the present life and/or after death”, something that the civic religion of the polis did not necessarily provide. Thirdly, “initiates garnered these advantages by establishing a special relationship with divinities during initiation.” Finally, the last two categories say that the mystery cults “were optional supplements to civic religion, rather than competing alternatives”, and that “myths were associated with the cults, which narrated tales of the cults’ divinities.”<sup>24</sup>

These categories may not be set in stone for all cases, as there were lesser mysteries as well, but Johnston says that these are good categories to have in mind when thinking of those major mystery cults like the Eleusinian Mysteries. The Eleusinian Mysteries are the most famous and esteemed of the mystery cults. These Mysteries were celebrated “every autumn at Eleusis in Attica,” which was a territory in Athens, and they were “in honour of the Two Goddesses, Demeter and her daughter Persephone.”<sup>25</sup> There were eight official days of festivities, including sacrifices to “various gods and processions from the centre of the city of Athens to the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore [Persephone] at Eleusis,” and there were also secret rituals that took place “behind the closed doors of the sanctuary which involved only those initiated, or being initiated, into the secrets of the cult.”<sup>26</sup>

An interesting part of the Eleusinian Mysteries occurs on the fourth day of festivities, in which sacrifices were made to honor the god Asclepius.<sup>27</sup> Known as the god of healing and medicine, and “connected with the boundary between life and death,” he

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<sup>24</sup> Sarah Iles Johnston, “Mysteries” from *Ancient Religion*, ed. Sarah Iles Johnston, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 99

<sup>25</sup> Hugh Bowden, *Mystery Cults of the Ancient World*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010) 26

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 30

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 34

had an important role in ancient religious culture.<sup>28</sup> What is most significant about him, however, are his origins. As he is associated with life and death, and healing, Asclepius already has an inferred intermediary role. He was also limited in his power, and was referred “even in the oldest hymns...not as god, but as ‘daimon’”<sup>29</sup> Asclepius also could take the form of a snake, a symbol for healing as “it can shimmy out of its old, dead skin and emerge as a shiny new being.”<sup>30</sup> As snakes were a symbol for Asclepius, they were used to guard his temples, and one snake was brought to Athens in 421 BCE, and was from then on worshiped alongside the goddesses of the Eleusinian Mysteries.<sup>31</sup> The Romans would use the snake of Asclepius as a symbolic guardian of their baths.<sup>32</sup>

Another famous example of mystery cult was that of Dionysus, which was celebrated by both Greek and Romans (as Bacchus). This was an example of an ecstatic cult, in which participants would engage in all sorts of revelry, including running through the countryside at night, in honor of Dionysus/Bacchus. This was attributed to both men and women, but there were also rites that were just for women and rites just for men. Interestingly, in 186 B.C.E, the senate in Rome “issued a decree that applied to all Romans and their allies, forbidding certain Bacchic practices unless explicitly approved by the Roman authorities,” and also the undoing of related structures.<sup>33</sup> Problems of authority may have had an effect on the disestablishing of the cult, but “established religious rites in honour of Dionysus” were not completely renounced.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 161

<sup>29</sup> Emma J. Edelstein, *Asclepius: Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies, Volume 1*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 83

<sup>30</sup> Robert Eisner, *The Road to Daulis: Psychoanalysis, Psychology, and Classical Mythology*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 242

<sup>31</sup> Bowden, 35

<sup>32</sup> Eisner, 242

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 124

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 124

In Roman household religion, we also find entities akin to that of the daimon, especially at this point the *Agathos Daimon*, or Good Daimon, guardian of the house. In Rome, these entities are the *Lares* and the *genius*. The *Lares* are more akin to Greek *heros*, but still held some daimonic qualities. The *Lares* were the deities that “protected the land on which the [individual] family lived.”<sup>35</sup> Each *Lar* was unique to an individual family, and it was something that received regular worship from the entire family, including slaves. There would be a shrine to the *Lar* in each home, and they “received offerings at all family feasts and banquets,” in addition to other worship.<sup>36</sup> They were represented from the beginning of the Empire forward, as “two young men dancing and pouring wine from a horn into a *patera* [libation bowl].”<sup>37</sup> The *genius* was very similar to the *Lares*, but instead of being considered an entity outside of the individuals, it was considered to be the embodiment of a person, place, or certain thing. Akin to the *Agathos Daimon* in Greece, the *genius* was represented by a snake. This *genius* cult was the responsibility of the head of the household, and the *genius* would be honored on their birthday.<sup>38</sup> Significantly, gods and goddesses also had their own *genius*. Other domestic deities in Rome consisted of the *Penates*, which were “vague deities lodged in the innermost part of a house”, they could, however, “be separated out into a number of individual deities particularly revered by the family.”<sup>39</sup> It is also important to note the importance of family, and the fact that particular family members may be deified after death, especially in upper class families.

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<sup>35</sup> John Scheid, *An Introduction to Roman Religion*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003), 165

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 156

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 156

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 157

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 157

Religion in both Greece and Rome had both its public and private realms. While private religion was not governed by the polis, or city, if it was deemed improper, as in the case of the cult of Bacchus, action could be taken. This is relevant to the discussion of public and private religion, as it illustrates what can occur when a form of private religion is considered improper, or perhaps even akin to magic. As we have seen, it can be quite difficult to really find a difference between the two; it all has to do with perception. What one culture may deem as religious practice, another may deem as magic. In both the religious culture of Greece and that of Rome, there was approved public ritual and a certain calendar that dictated the appropriate festivals. These ideas of religious practice are important when looking at the various incarnations of the daimon over time.

### **Magic, Religion, and the Daimon**

These distinctions of magic and religion, and public and private are relevant to the daimon as their own changes somewhat mirror the evolution of the daimon. It did take time for the daimon to shift so dramatically, however. The idea of the daimon seems to have been a part of Greek culture long before it evolved into something that could be thought of as a danger. Walter Burkert, in his *Greek Religion*, says that while there were many gods, *theoi*, in the Greek religious pantheon, with Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* a new sort of category emerged: the *daimon*. He says that "if in religion an evolution from a lower to a higher level is assumed, belief in demons must be older than belief in gods."<sup>40</sup> While there is nothing in Greek literature that can back up this claim, it is a plausible scenario. When looking at these early ideas of the daimon, they seem to have

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<sup>40</sup> Burkert, 179

begun as more of a force or action before becoming something thought of as an entity in its own right.

A demon is usually thought of as a creature, an actual *being*. This, however, might not have been the case with early concepts. In the *Iliad*, Homer describes Aphrodite as leading the way ahead of Helen as a daimon.<sup>41</sup> This seems to denote that it was more of a movement, an illustrator of an action, not quite an entity in itself. In this case, it seems as though the term daimon insinuates that Aphrodite is acting in an intermediary manner, or that she is performing in between the realms of the mortals and the gods. Burkert explains that in his interpretation of ancient texts, the daimon is an “occult power, a force that drives man forward where no agent can be named.”<sup>42</sup> This sort of interpretation can be gleaned from the fact that the use of the word daimon is descriptive, rather than naming an entity at this point. Instead of being a creature to be either used or feared, it could be a descriptor for divine actions. It can be thought of as something to describe all other remnants of the divine realm which “eludes characterization and naming.”<sup>43</sup>

Hesiod also touches upon the daimonic, for example in his *Theogony* and *Works and Days*. Hesiod shed light on new ideas for the entity, as to him they were their own distinct category, not merely an action. Hesiod himself, in *Works and Days*, created a history of the Greeks that involved five separate ages: the Golden Age, the Silver Age, the Bronze Age, the Heroic Age, and the Iron Age. Each of these ages saw the creation of new races of men, and important changes to Greek culture. The age that is most relevant to the conversation here is the Golden Age. According to Hesiod, during this period Zeus created the first race of man, “which was golden...Godlike, they lived like

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<sup>41</sup> Homer, in Burkert, 180

<sup>42</sup> Burkert, 180

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 180

gods and their hearts were entirely carefree.”<sup>44</sup> It goes on to say that when this race had died out, they became “pure spirits, inhabiting earth and Noble protectors of mankind, warding off evils from mortals.”<sup>45</sup>

The fact that these men of the Golden Age were transformed into spirits after death seems to tie into the idea of the daimon as having moved from describing an action to a being guardian spirit of sorts. These men are by no means *theoi*, but inhabit the middle area between the gods and mortals. This is the same middle area where the daimon dwells, something that Burkert postulates as well. He says that once this race had died out, “[they] were transformed by Zeus into *daimones*, guardians over mortals, good beings who dispense riches.”<sup>46</sup> Importantly, they cannot be seen, but are only known because of their deeds; either their guardianship or their dispensing of good things.

There is no fearful demon, even in the tale of Pandora’s Box. In that case, what has been let loose is named as *nosoi*, or illnesses, not *daimones*.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, possession comes from the gods, or *theoi*, not a daimon. In the religious culture of later periods, and even in our own religious and popular culture today, it is the latter that is intent on the possessing of souls, not gods. It could be, also, that the reason why *daimones* were seen as descriptive of something stems from the fact that there was no recognized cult for the daimon at that time. They were not worshiped, nor were they recognized for sacrifice, in most cases, at least. Hesiod’s mythology not only seems to have brought the idea of *daimones* to the fore, but it also brought about the ideas of contemporaries also being worshiped as *daimones* after death: the oft practiced ruler-cults. In the ruler-cults of the

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<sup>44</sup> Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 109-110

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 109

<sup>46</sup> Burkert, 180

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 180

Hellenistic era and even beyond, the deceased individual, for example Alexander the Great, would be worshiped in a way similar to other ritual. What is unclear is whether or not it was the individual that was being worshiped, or if it was the daimon of that individual. What is clear, however, is that the ruler-cult ritual was much like the cultic ritual of the *Agathos Daimon*.

The only early depiction of the daimon that had any sort of recognizable cult figure was that of the *Agathos Daimon*, or Good Daimon of the Classical Period of Greece. This figure had the “first libation at wine-drinking in general and in the Dionysos sanctuary in particular...made in his honor,” and he was depicted as a snake.”<sup>48</sup> Martin Nilsson, in his *Greek Folk Religion*, says that the *Agathos Daimon* was not only an entity to which one would devote the first libation at a ritual, but it also had cultic significance in the home as well.<sup>49</sup> In his exposition on the house cult, of which he explains that the hearth was the center, and that just as some religious individuals will say a prayer before a meal, “the Greeks before the meal offered a few drops of unmixed wine on the floor. The libation was said to be made to Agathos Daimon, the Good Daimon or the guardian of the house, who appears in snake form.”<sup>50</sup> The fact that this particular daimon had some sort of iconographic presence and cultic ritual is definitely important to understanding the evolution of the daimon into an entity as it shows it has become something that was worshiped in the home. Another interesting aspect of this Agathos Daimon is its guardian nature, according to Nilsson. Did this denote some sort of guardian angel-like role for the daimon?

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 180

<sup>49</sup> Martin P. Nilsson, *Greek Folk Religion*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1940), 73

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 73



Socrates, the Classical Greek philosopher, may have been influenced by this idea of daimon as guardian, or voice of reason. Most of the evidence of this comes from the writings of Plato, Aristotle, and Xenophon. It is in Plato's *Symposium* that we get the idea of Socrates learning about daimones as spiritual beings. In this instance, Socrates is speaking to the priestess Diotima, and the conversation is as follows:

“ 'What would Eros then be?' I said. 'A mortal?'  
“ 'Hardly that.'  
“ 'Well, what then?'  
“ 'Just as before,' she said, 'between mortal and immortal.'  
“ 'What is that, Diotima?'  
“ 'A great daemon, Socrates, for everything daemonic is between god and mortal.'”<sup>51</sup>

The argument here is that the daimon and the daemonic are, again, *between*. Diotima goes on to say that the role of the daimon is " 'interpreting and ferrying to gods things from human beings and to human beings things from gods: the requests and sacrifices of human beings, the orders and exchanges-for-sacrifices of gods; for it is in the middle of both and fills up the interval so that the whole itself has been bound together by it...' " the daimon is interpreted here as a go-between amid the gods and humans as “a god does not mingle with a human being; but through this occurs the whole intercourse and conversation of gods with human beings while they are awake and asleep. And he who is wise in things like this is a daemonic man.”<sup>52</sup> After explaining what a daimon is, she says ““these daemons are many and of all kinds; and one of them is Eros,”” thus personifying that type of emotion, and labeling it daemonic.<sup>53</sup>

Another of Plato's works chronicles the apology of Socrates, during his trial for his views on politics and religion. In this text, Socrates admits to believing in a spirit (*daimonion*), or a daimon that has followed him since his birth. While Plato's Socrates

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<sup>51</sup> Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Seth Bernardete, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 17

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 17

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 17

never explicitly says this, it can be presumed that it was thought of as a daimon, as it is very much akin to the category of guardian or familiar. According to Plato, Socrates felt that this daimon was a guardian of sorts for him, as he says that “whenever it speaks it turns me away from something I am about to do, but it never encourages me to do anything.”<sup>54</sup> Here the daimon seems to act as a sort of conscience, steering Socrates away from acts that may not have been in his best interest. Significantly, however, it does not attempt to guide him into actually *doing* anything. Therefore this daimon is more of a guardian than a possessor. It is also interesting that Plato writes that Socrates uses this daimon to justify his going into court that day, saying that:

“At all previous times my familiar prophetic power, my spiritual manifestation, frequently opposed me, even in small matters, when I was about to do something wrong, but now that, as you can see for yourselves, I was faced with what one might think, and what is generally thought to be, the worst of evils, my divine sign has not opposed me, either when I left home at dawn, or when I came into court.”<sup>55</sup>

While Socrates’ *daimonion* seems to be one of the most famous instances of a daimon as a guardian spirit, another important point in the evolution of the daimon came with the students of Plato, Aristotle and Xenocrates. This is when the daimon undergoes its first major change. Burkert says that to Aristotle, the daimonic existed, but it was more an issue of being a descriptor, much like prior ideas. He says that “dreams are daemonic, but do not come from the gods; the nature of living being is daemonic, that is, worthy of wonder,” but it is not something that is akin to a god.<sup>56</sup> Xenocrates, on the other hand, is credited with creating the modern idea of the demon.

According to Xenocrates’ ideas of the universe, there were three tiers of sorts, “divided into 1. supercelestial, 2. celestial, and 3. sublunary regions, in which gods,

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<sup>54</sup> Plato, *Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo*, trans. G.M.A Grube, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1981), 29

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 35

<sup>56</sup> Burkert, 332

daemons, and men are assigned their appropriate places”<sup>57</sup> In this stratified version, the daimones were a part of the sublunary region, which meant that they had the ability to go back and forth between gods and men. While Xenocrates contends that the daimon is in a place above humans, it has the ability of perception of the body, meaning that it can feel both pleasure and pain, much like mortal human beings. The fact that daimones have the ability to be affected by these things, some have argued, have thus given it a dualistic quality; some daimones would be led toward “good” as a result, while others “evil”. Burkert postulates that “they are soul-like, they are affected by delight and suffering,” but also adds that “it is they who bring about diseases, barrenness of the earth, discord among citizens, and similar calamities to make men succumb to their will.”<sup>58</sup> By adding this new dualism within the daimonic, there *is* a major change to the thought of the daimon. However, it should be noted that this goes along with ideas of the human soul. The more a daimon is a part of human suffering, the more it becomes *like* it.

While it is significant that there is dualism present in the daimonic by the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E, it is hard to concede that *this* is the point where the daimon becomes truly what we know it as today, though there are those who argue just that. It seems simplistic to say this, as the daimon is now more associated with the human soul. To argue that the daimon has become the demon now is a gross generalization of the intricacies of the entity, and not something that was believed by all. There are still *good* daimones at this point in time, and they are still under the umbrella of the daimonic, not separate entities as they will become at a later period. In this way, they are much like the human soul they

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<sup>57</sup> Hermann S. Schibli, “Xenocrates' Daemons and the Irrational Soul”, *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, Vol. 43, No. 1, (1993), 144

<sup>58</sup> Burkert, 332

are compared to: some lean towards the “good”, while others do not. The Greek dramatist Menander definitely took issue with this and said in one of his plays that :

“At birth a daimon stands by each man, the good mystagogue of life; for one should not believe that there is such a thing as an evil daimon which harms one's life, or that God is evil-rather He is entirely good. Those who have an evil character create many conflicts in their life and show their stupidity in all things, and lay the blame on their daimon and speak ill of it, although they are themselves to blame.”<sup>59</sup> Therefore, it seems that Menander is saying that he or she ought to not blame their own

shortcomings on the “evil” nature of their daimon, but realize that they themselves are culpable.

In thinking about these good daimones, it seems as though a majority saw them as being guardians of sorts. Reaching back to Dodds’ three categories of daimon, he says that this idea may have been present even as early as the end of the Archaic Age. That third category, as previously mentioned, of a daimon that “is attached to a particular individual”, would definitely seem to be some sort of protector, as it supposedly “determines, wholly or in part, his individual destiny.”<sup>60</sup> Here, also, the daimon is attributed to being a man’s fortune, or *tyche*. The historian Plutarch was very much influenced by Xenocrates’ ideas of dualism present in the daimonic, but he also added his own ideas to the category. Much of the textual evidence of daimones comes from the works of Plutarch.<sup>61</sup>

Plutarch gave to the daimones some of the duties of the gods, but unlike the gods, he says that they had the ability to age; they would grow old and would eventually die after many centuries. It was this explanation that he used to describe the decline in oracles, by saying that the daimones were in charge of them, and were growing old and

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<sup>59</sup> Menander , *Fr.* 714 trans. Korte-Thierfelder, as found in: Frederick E. Brenke, “ ‘A Most Strange Doctrine’: Daimon in Plutarch”, *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 69, No. 1, (Oct. - Nov., 1973), 9

<sup>60</sup> Dodds, 42

<sup>61</sup> Menander, as found in Brenke, 11

dying.<sup>62</sup> In his *On The Ceasing of Oracles*, there is a detailed conversation between two men, Heracleon and Cleombrotus, that details this. Heracleon agrees that the daimones could have the duty to oversee the oracles, but that to say that they grew old and died was a bit “rash”. Cleombrotus, however, does not agree. In speaking to Heracleon, he says: “you agree that daemons exist, but by denying that they can be bad and mortal you no longer admit that they are daemons.”<sup>63</sup> Thus, Cleombrotus sees that the daimon is inherently like human beings, and to deny this fact is to say that they are not daimonic.

A third man in the conversation, Philip, explains that this idea of the daimon as having the same urges and desires as human beings has been inherited by both Plato and Xenocrates, among others.<sup>64</sup> In the same work, Plutarch also goes about describing the daimon in more detail. The man Cleombrotus again describes the daimon by saying that “there are those who have discovered that the race of daemons, halfway between gods and men, communicates between the gods and mankind and establishes a relationship between them and us.”<sup>65</sup> He says that it should not matter where the traditions came from, and also attributes the idea of a lifespan for these daimones to Hesiod. Plutarch also emphasizes that the gods do not communicate with human beings on their own, and this is why the daimon’s duty is to watch over the oracles, as they are the go-between. He says that “when daemons in charge of divination vanish, the oracles vanish along with them and are gone. When daemons go into exile, or emigrate, the oracles lose their power, but when daemons come back, even after a long time, the oracles speak again.”<sup>66</sup> He emphasizes the fact that communication between the divine and humanity is done

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<sup>62</sup> Luck, 238

<sup>63</sup> Plutarch, *On The Ceasing of Oracles*, in *Arcana Mundi*, 278-279

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 279

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 280

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 282

through the daimonic. There are those who also see that while Plutarch may have been influenced by Xenocrates' dualism, in his own writing he may have downplayed the idea of an "evil" daimon. According to Frederick Brenke, Plutarch "prefers to minimize the influence of evil spirits even if they should exist. Particularly in *Lives* there is little indication he was convinced of the power of evil daimones. Where the word daimon appears in *Lives* it can generally be associated with *tyche*."<sup>67</sup> Thus, Plutarch's own restraint when discussing an "evil" daimon also may denote his use of associating it with fortune, rather than an entity.

In going from action to entity, there is another aspect to the daimon that arises. Due to his great success at empire building, Alexander the Great grew to see himself as divine. Out of this emerged the idea of the ruler cult. There is contention, however, as to whether or not what was worshiped was Alexander, or his daimon, as it was believed that the soul became a daimon after death. Some have said that this may have been influenced by a practice among the Achaemenid kings, who worshiped a daimon-like figure in the *fravashi*.<sup>68</sup> It is difficult to say, due to the fact that Menander and Plutarch still believe the daimon to be an external figure. It is not something that is a part of the ruler, but something that is outside, a guardian or protector, a spirit. This is where the *Agathos Daimon* plays a larger role. According to legend, When Alexander founded Alexandria, he encountered the great serpent of the Agathos Daimon and slayed it. After building a shrine to memorialize this, "out of the shrine doors, however, there emerged myriads of other serpents," and as they began to move inside Alexandrian homes, local mystics said that "these should be worshiped as good spirits", or

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<sup>67</sup> Brenke, 11

<sup>68</sup> W.W. Tarn, "The Hellenistic Ruler-Cult and the Daemon", *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 48, Part 2, (1928), 207

daimones.<sup>69</sup> This shrine would remain there until into the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D., something that was protected by those around it.

The ruler-cult daimon, when considered in Roman religious culture, was another aspect of the *genius*. Each ruler and their families had their own certain genius, which was duly revered. As mentioned previously, the genius itself could represent a person, place, or a thing. The genius-cult of the emperor represented an individual, and began with the emperor Augustus. It was also customary, however, to worship the genius, or Juno or the empress, and both were represented by the individual wearing a toga and carrying a horn of plenty.<sup>70</sup>

After contact with Judaism and Christianity, there are examples of what could be seen as exorcism of daimones. In the case of Apollonius of Tyana, the Neopythagorean philosopher, the exorcism he performed was slightly different than that of Jesus. In Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, he describes this event in great detail.

According to Philostratus, Apollonius encountered a young man who did not know that he had been possessed; in fact, most people just thought that his enthusiasm came from his age, but according to Apollonius, "he was the mouthpiece of the daemon."<sup>71</sup>

Apollonius spoke angrily to the daimon, and then asked for a sign that it had left the individual, something unique to this exorcism. The daimon said that he would knock

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<sup>69</sup> Margarita Lianou, "The Role of the Argeadai in the Legitimation of the Ptolemaic Dynasty: Rhetoric and Practice," in *Philip II and Alexander the Great : Father and Son, Lives and Afterlives* ed. Elizabeth Carney, Daniel Ogden, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 126

<sup>70</sup> Scheid, 162

<sup>71</sup> Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, in *Arcana Mundi*, 293

down a statue, and he did just that, proving that he had left the young man.<sup>72</sup> The young man then awoke, completely unaware of what had happened.

By the third century C.E., daimonology had become something of a science and it was important to be able to differentiate between the different classes of gods. It is significant that at this point in time the idea of the daimon as being both an entity, and *between* are still in existence, even as it is evolving within religious culture to become something with more negative influences. The Neoplatonist philosopher Iamblichus had much to say on this topic as well. It is clear that there is a definite hierarchy between the gods and the daimones, and Iamblichus attempts to differentiate between the invisibility of gods and the invisibility of daimones. It is also important to Iamblichus to differentiate between heroes and gods. In his *On the Mysteries of Egypt*, he says that “daemons are produced according to the generative and creative powers of the gods in the most remote...termination of the progression,” while heroes are “produced according to the vital principles in divine beings.”<sup>73</sup> He says that “we must assume that those [activities] of the daemon are cosmic in a higher sense and have a wider extension as far as their effects are concerned,” whereas in the case of heroes, their actions are “not as far-reaching and are oriented toward the disposition of the souls.”<sup>74</sup> It is very important to note here that he emphasizes the influence that the daimones have over *creation*, and that they are aiding each organism to perfection, while the heroes, in this case, have influence over the soul. The daimon’s influence is in the connection of body and soul.

The evolution of the daimon over time until the rise of Christianity shows significant changes; however, those changes seem to come in what form the daimon may

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 293

<sup>73</sup> Iamblichus, *On The Mysteries of Egypt*, in *Arcana Mundi*, 296

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 296



take. In the archaic age of Greece, we can see that the daimonic was seen to be the descriptor of an action, or a force, something that was seen to be somewhat divine, but not really an entity. Hesiod is really the first to actually give the daimon a sense of *being*, when he wrote about the different classes of men. From there, however, it is interesting to see how it has a sense of being either an emotion, or perhaps the *personification* of an emotion, and that it is not until really into the third and fourth centuries B.C.E. that it takes on a more guardian-like form. What is most significant throughout all of the changes that are made prior to it becoming a *demon* is that even when it is given a more dualistic quality from Xenocrates and his contemporaries, this makes it more human. It is difficult to see that this is the point of drastic change. Again, the daimon is given qualities that make it more human in nature. It gains the ability to *feel* both the pleasurable and the painful. It seems problematic to equate this with the daimon becoming “evil”. It is quite a generalization to say that *this* point gives the daimon the qualities that it ultimately needed to become a *demon* by monotheistic religion. The next chapter will look at the daimon in action, so to speak. In looking at various forms of incantations, ritual, and worship, there is a sense of this evolution, but it also places great importance on the idea of intent.

## Chapter 3: Daimones, Magic, and Ritual

### The Daimon in Curse Tablets

After seeing the evolution from invisible force to entity, it is equally as important to note the daimon's role in actual magical practice, as differentiated from public religious rite as it illustrates how the daimon was *used*. While most textual evidence for the “existence” of the daimon comes from works by Homer or Hesiod, or from being debated in a philosophical setting, daimons were equally important in the realms of magical versus religious practice. As previously discussed, some forms of the daimon may have been important to religious rites – for example, the importance of the dedication of the first libation to the *Agathos Daimon* within the worship of Dionysos. Other examples of daimon worship come in the form of the house cult, wherein the first drops of unmixed wine would be dedicated to their own form of the Good Demon, or in Rome what was known as the *genius*.<sup>75</sup> The use of the daimon was not, however, confined to worship in the house cult; in fact, it was not merely worshiped.

The daimon, in some cases, was also invoked via an incantation or what we might call today a spell, for a certain purpose. In many instances the danger of using this helpmate of sorts is made known, as there is a certain fear attributed to it. This semblance of fear, however, may have been out of respect, as this respect came with the belief that this entity could aid in magical exercise. One of these examples of the invocation of a daimon comes from the use of curse tablets and binding spells, which were especially prevalent in the Greco-Roman era. Through the use of these *defixiones*, one could gain control over certain things in the “magical” realms. John G. Gager, in his *Curse Tablets*

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<sup>75</sup> Nilsson, 70

*and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* gives examples of these *defixiones* and shows how they were used in order to purportedly affect the physical world.

One of the first examples of these *defixiones* postulates that the daimon itself was in fact both a go-between for the mortal and immortal realms, as well as something to be invoked to accomplish the caster's goal. This lead tablet from Athens dates to the fourth century B.C.E, and concerns the recovery of lost persons, as well as love affairs, perhaps with *hetairai*, or courtesans. It begins by saying, "I am sending a letter to the *daimones* and to Persephone, and deliver (to them) Tribitis, (daughter of) Choirine, who did me wrong..."<sup>76</sup> it then goes on to invoke the restraining of the athletes "Aristomachos and Aristonumos" as well as other women, "Galene, daughter of Polukleia." Thus, it appears that the daimon is being invoked, as well as Persephone, to go about restraining both the boxers and the *hetairai*, as it seems that the former had won the latter's affections. In this case, the daimon is not only in conversation with other deities, but is also working *for* the magic practitioner.

Many of these curse tablets included the invocation of daimones in order to accomplish a goal. Gager says that this is especially so in the tablets from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, as they were highly syncretized, Greek and Roman religious practices were in constant contact not only with each other, but also with religious practices from the Near East and Egypt. Not only that, but these *defixiones* show a shift to private religious practices, in which many different daimones, as well as other pagan deities were being invoked. He gives the example of an incantation from either the third or fourth century

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<sup>76</sup> Gager, 201

C.E.,<sup>77</sup> which took place in a graveyard. It begins by saying; “I invoke you, spirit of the dead...”<sup>78</sup> This seems to conflate the spirits of the dead with *daimones*, as Gager says that “here again in the primary and immediate agents are the *daimones* and spirits of the dead people in and around the cemetery.”<sup>79</sup> This curse was apparently done in order to bewitch a woman by the name of Matrona.

In another example, which dates from the later fifth century C.E., Gager provides another binding curse that states, “for I invoke you *daimones* who lie here, who are continually nourished here and who reside here and also you young ones who died prematurely.”<sup>80</sup> This is a particularly long incantation that deals a lot with the subject of the daimon. It later says, “I invoke you *daimones* who lie here: IEO IIIAIA EIA IAO IAE IAO ALILAMPS. I hand over (this spell) to you in the land of the dogs.”<sup>81</sup> Gager says that “the land of the dogs” might refer to Egypt, as that is where this tablet was finally deposited. It continues to say “*Daimones*, I place an oath on you in/by the stele of the gods.”<sup>82</sup> This is fitting, as it was found in a cemetery. It shows the practitioner’s faith in the entity, however, that it would be bound to follow his will from that oath. Gager brings up later that the earlier conflation of the daimon and the spirits of the dead is perhaps not as confusing an idea as it seems. Instead of associating the daimon with the dead, “at least with the later tablets, the role of the deities and *daimones* was not to carry out the curse

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<sup>77</sup> The practices themselves involving curse tablets do not really seem to change that much over time, at least in these early centuries.

<sup>78</sup> Gager, 101

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 103

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 103

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 104

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 104

itself, but rather to see to it that the spirit of the dead person executed the spell as commanded.”<sup>83</sup> Thus, the daimon was not really the doer but the overseer.

Although changes occurred in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE that would create a division between the daimon, bringing about a good and a bad side, it is clear by these incantations that the daimon was still being invoked as a helpmate. While there may have been feelings of fear toward the entity, it makes more sense that this would have been out of respect, as there was still an air of trust on the side of the practitioner that the daimon would ultimately follow through with the request. The shift to more private religious practice seems to show how this belief of daimones, as helpmate, survived early Christianity, as many of the later spells discussed show. This is markedly different than the fear felt towards the demon of later periods.

### **The Daimon and “Voodoo Dolls”**

Another dimension of binding spells comes in the form of “voodoo” dolls or *kolossoi*. Christopher Faraone says it is clear that many Greeks did use the practice of burying or binding effigies done in the image of, or to represent, deities or daimones etc.<sup>84</sup> He says that while there were different kinds of effigies that were used to represent gods and/or human enemies, it is the smaller dolls that were not meant for public consumption that provide more examples of representations of daimones.<sup>85</sup> The most significant factor here, however, is the fact that the practitioners were more than likely

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 118

<sup>84</sup> Christopher A. Faraone, “Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil: The Defensive Use of “Voodoo Dolls” in Ancient Greece” *Classical Antiquity*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Oct., 1991), 166

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 174

not attempting to *destroy* the entity, but merely have control over it, a form of defensive magic.<sup>86</sup>

These *kolossoi* were more prevalent in both curse tablets and other spells, especially love spells. An example of this comes in the form of a figure which was found with a lead curse tablet from the first century C.E. This spell was supposedly performed by Sarapammon, and was done with the intent of having the woman Ptolemais brought to him. Within this spell, the caster calls upon daimones, but especially the ghost-daimon Antinous. It is interesting that he is referred to as a ghost-daimon, or *nekudaimon*, as this could in fact be a reference to a real individual, Antinous, who was beloved by the emperor Hadrian.<sup>87</sup> Perhaps, due to the nature of his death, his place in the underworld made him a powerful source to call upon. The fact that he is referred to as being a daimon, seems to underline the fact that it was believed that great individuals had their own daimon, which was worshiped in ruler-cult.

The spell itself says, “I adjure you all demons in this place to assist this demon Antinous. Rouse yourself for me and take yourself off to every district, every block, every house, and bind Ptolemais...”<sup>88</sup> This is again repeated directly at the daimon Antinous, saying that he should “restrain her food, her drink” until she went to Sarapammon, and directed the daimon to also “drag her by the hair, the guts, until she no longer disdains [him].”<sup>89</sup> The curse itself was found on a lead tablet, but it was accompanied by a figure made of clay now known as the Louvre doll. It is clearly the form of a woman, who has been bound at the feet and the hands, kneeling, and pierced by

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 166

<sup>87</sup> Daniel Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 251

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 250

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 250- 251

thirteen needles; the hopeful outcome of the use of this figure would have been to keep the woman Ptolemais completely restrained until she overcame her “disdain” of Sarapammon and/or came to realize her love for him.<sup>90</sup> The daimon Antinous could only be released after she had done so, and was willing to submit to Sarapammon for the “full extent of [his] life”.<sup>91</sup>

An example to show how these effigies were not looked upon in a positive light, in this case in Rome, comes from Apuleius after the accusation made against him for using magic. In his *Apology*, he says that he is being accused of asking a skilled craftsman to “make some mechanical devices” for him, “together with an effigy of a god of his choosing.”<sup>92</sup> It seems that the story went on to say that the figure made was “an emaciated or altogether disemboweled one of a dreadful corpse, a terrible form resembling an evil ghost.”<sup>93</sup> At this point, Apuleius has his figures brought out and he asks those present, “is this a skeleton? Is this an evil ghost? Is this what you kept calling a...little demon?” The doll itself was supposed to represent Hermes or Mercury, but Apuleius denied that it was for the use of manipulating ghosts and daimones to do his will.<sup>94</sup>

These so-called “voodoo” dolls did have a large role in the magical cultures of ancient Greece and Rome. It is clear that they were used to not only attempt to wield control over various ghosts and daimones in the underworld, but were especially of use when it came to love spells and erotic incantations. While in many occasions they were tied to curse tablets, or *defixiones*, they could also stand alone, especially in the case of

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 251

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 251

<sup>92</sup> Apuleius, *Apology*, 62

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 62

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 63

erotic spells. The eros-assistant and other daimones used in love magic are good examples of this because these spells called for representations of the daimones that were being called upon.

### **The Daimon, Erotic Spells, and Gender**

One gets a fuller view of the use of the daimon as an assistant of sorts in erotic and love spells. John Winkler's *The Constraints of Desire* illustrates just this. While he does not explicitly use the word daimon, what he presents as the "Eros Assistant" is strikingly similar in character to the ideas presented by Gager and others. Winkler says that in order to use this assistant, one must create out of wax a depiction (*kolossoi*) of Eros. That is not the end of the task, however, as it is only after "it has absorbed the life-breath of seven strangled birds" that it will "serve its master in bearing powerful messages of compulsion to all men and women whom the owner wishes to influence."<sup>95</sup> The influence that this assistant provides is psychological; the power of this entity is to "enter people's houses...to appear in their dreams or as a divine visitation in the midst of sleep."<sup>96</sup>

This is mostly, of course, to provide anxiety to the dreamer, in order to help the spell-caster gain his or her influence. This is made clear even in literature. In Lucian's *Philopseudes*, there is an encounter describing a Hyperborean man who performs this kind of magic. In this instance, Cleodemus says that he heard of this man "' sending eros-dolls to get people, bringing demons up from the underworld, reanimating moldy corpses, summoning Hecate herself before him to assist him, large as life, and calling down the

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<sup>95</sup> John J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), 79

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 79



moon’”.<sup>97</sup> Of course, the man is seen to be a Hyperborean, a member of a mythical race of men from the north, so this man’s magic would have seemed fantastical and “other”, much of his magic comes from “shaman tradition”.<sup>98</sup> It is clear, however, that these same kinds of ritual and incantation were practiced in ancient Greece and Rome.

According to some sources, Winkler says, prior to any spell-casting one must take that clay assistant to the home of whoever the “victim” might be. Once there, they must tell the statue, “Look, here is where Miss So-and-so dwells; stand above her and say the words I have chosen, assuming the appearance of the god or demon she worships.”<sup>99</sup> Winkler gives the hypothetical night scene, in which an “agent” performs a love spell upon a certain “victim”. He shows that what is *supposedly* to happen is that the agent’s assistant, upon hearing his words, would make the victim anxious and tormented. What Winkler gives as the more likely scenario is that the “intended victim is in all likelihood sleeping peacefully; blissfully ignorant of what some love-struck lunatic is doing on his roof.”<sup>100</sup>

What is significant here is also the gender dynamics at play. These types of spells, or *agogai*, are intended to result in the desired individual being led – by an Eros assistant – to the home of the caster. Winkler says that the individuals performing these types of spells are predominantly male, and that in fact the spell has an outcome opposite of what was intended; instead, “the lover himself is...powerfully preoccupied with thoughts of the victim.”<sup>101</sup> The word choice of “agent” and “victim” are significant in themselves, as they insinuate a power structure. Winkler elaborates on this structure by saying that in

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<sup>97</sup> Lucian, *Philoseudes*, 13

<sup>98</sup> Ogden, 255

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 91

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 87

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 87

these spells the purpose is psychological as “the lover aims to create in his victim a state of mental fixation on himself – but the imagery is physically violent, even sadistic.”<sup>102</sup> In another interesting turn, it even seems as though many of these erotic spells are made with the same terminology and methods as those to be used against enemies. Of course, Winkler reminds us to remember that the ultimate submission expected by the female “victim” is a matter of social protocol, not necessarily sexual practice.<sup>103</sup> The daimon, we must remember, is here acting upon the *intent* of the agent, but may also be sought out due to its association with the underworld. This is still not necessarily *evil*, but it is definitely unlike the guardian of earlier periods.

While being a topic widely contested, the gender of the participants is significant to magic-working in the ancient world. Matthew W. Dickie has said that the thesis which much scholarship rests upon is that while many assumed that those taking part in erotic were mostly female, the evidence suggests that “men were the main participants in this form of magic-working.”<sup>104</sup> Both Winkler and Graf argue that men were the most active participants in love-magic, albeit in different ways. Winkler’s thesis is that, as mentioned above, “male authors who portray female erotic magic-working are all in their own way....frustrated sexual fantasists,” much like those men who “perform magical rituals directed at girls asleep in their beds onto whom they project their own tortured feelings.”<sup>105</sup> Graf’s argument is slightly different, in that he explains that men are the majority of participants in love magic, and the reason that literature portrays it as a female domain is that “such tales take magic out of the sphere of men, where it ought to

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 94

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 96

<sup>104</sup> Matthew W. Dickie, “Who Practised Love-Magic in Classic Antiquity and in the Late Roman World?”, *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, Vol. 50, No. 2, (2000), 563

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 564

have no place, since a real man does not use magic to attain his ends.,” and by feminizing the use of magic, would deter men from participating in magical practices.<sup>106</sup> Thus, the portrayals of women as magic practitioners in literature play out as a warning of sorts: real men do not actively take part in love magic; it should be avoided as it “belongs to the realm of women.”<sup>107</sup>

Dickie’s own argument is that there is plenty of evidence to show that women were *also* actively taking part in love magic, and that perhaps the male practitioner/female victim dichotomy was merely a product of language. He says that in reality, this pattern of man as the agent and woman as the object is something that, instead of telling us about the suppositions of those writing the spells, it comes out of the preference given to the masculine grammatical gender of the Greek language.<sup>108</sup> It may have been merely a convention for creating and recording spells that could easily be performed by either sex. There are, however, instances in which explicitly a woman was performing the spell. Therefore, it should not be taken as gospel that men were the only ones to use daimones, or an eros-assistant to gain something from an erotic spell.

One of Winkler’s students, Christopher Faraone, provides other interesting insight into the role that the daimon has with love spells and the erotic. His research, in *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, infers that “both literary and iconographic evidence corroborate the impression that Eros began his career as a frighteningly demonic figure.”<sup>109</sup> This is not so far from believable, as his weapons of choice are the familiar bow and arrow, as well as whips. This combined with Winkler’s idea of the Eros Assistant providing torment and

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 564

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 564

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 566

<sup>109</sup> Christopher A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 45

anxiety through sleep, seems to denote an idea of Eros as being a daimon in his own right. Interestingly, he says that “Greeks never personify or demonize *philia* or *agape*, nor do they ever picture a deity hurling *philia* or *agape* at mortals in a hostile way.”<sup>110</sup> This suggests important implications toward how the idea of *eros* was seen in the ancient world, gives merit to the idea that the daimon or assistant of sorts was not inherently evil or bad; it was dependent upon the actions of those summoning it.

In another of Faraone’s works, he discusses the gendered aspects of daimonology. The idea of the “wandering womb” was one that developed in the later periods of Greek antiquity, and was even found to have occurred in Rome. According to his research, in the ancient world there was a belief that ailments and illnesses that occurred in women happened because the uterus was moving itself around the body (e.g. if resting itself upon the diaphragm, the uterus was the cause of shortness of breath), and that perhaps these ailments were caused by some sort of daimonic entity.<sup>111</sup> Faraone states that “in the Hippocratic tradition, then, women alone are struck by a disease that is like an epileptic seizure that is caused by the displacement of the womb...”<sup>112</sup> In the instances in which it was thought to have moved about, the cure would be to “fumigate her under her nose, burning some wool and adding to the fire some asphalt...Rub her groin and the interior of her thighs with a very sweet-smelling unguent...” that by doing so, the physician would be able to lure the “wandering womb” back where it belonged.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 29

<sup>111</sup> Christopher A. Faraone, “The Rise of the Demon Womb in Greco-Roman Antiquity” in *Finding Persephone: Women’s Rituals in the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. Maryline Parca and Angeliki Tzanetou, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), 155

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 156

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 156

That a daimon could do something *physical* to an individual, especially female, was not relegated to only the “wandering womb”. In fact, in Classical Greece, there are instances in which daimons were thought to have “deflowered” young girls. Lesley Dean-Jones, in her *Women’s Bodies and Classical Greek Science*, says that in some cases, menarche was “taken to be loss of virginity by an unseen demon,” and that pre-menstrual girls were often taken to priests in order to be “deflowered in safety, sometimes artificially.”<sup>114</sup> It does not seem as though there are necessarily *evil* connotations here. Perhaps this is due mainly to a need to explain what was happening to women’s bodies, as well as the fact that there were examples of sexual relations between deities and humans in their own mythology; sex with daimones, then, may not have seemed totally implausible, and would become something to fear in later periods of European history.

While not all Greco-Roman physicians held the belief of the “wandering womb”, or perhaps “deflowering” by a daimon, it was still accepted that a daimon could cause certain ailments if it had possessed the uterus. Thus, in order to cure the woman an exorcist of sorts would have to be brought in. It is interesting that this possession occurs in the womb, as the implication is that possession of this kind and the ailments that it brought would only have been able to affect women. Thus, this possession at this period in time would have been a completely gendered experience. This is an interesting point, especially when thought of in conjunction with later evolutions of gender and possession.

Faraone says that even though there are no theoretical writings concerning these practices, there is evidence in the form of various amulets and spells. The earliest evidence of this comes from a magic spell that was used in an attempt to prevent a womb from moving. It says: “I adjure [*exhorkizo*] you, womb of Ipsa, whom Ipsa bore, in order

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<sup>114</sup> Lesley Dean-Jones, *Women’s Bodies and Classical Greek Science*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 52

that you never abandon your place, in the name of the lord god, the living, the unconquerable: remain in your spot.”<sup>115</sup> According to Faraone, the more “threatening” nature of this spell deems it to be an exorcism, and these spells were always “sworn before a deity”; In this case, that deity was the “god of the Jews, who is frequently invoked in Roman period magical texts.”<sup>116</sup> This is significant, as it shows that contact with the Abrahamic religion had had an effect upon magical thinking, and the role of the daimon.

This possession seems to go hand in hand with an acknowledgement of a singular “god”, and it is this same “god” who is invoked to remove the harmful spirit. Another important point that Faraone makes is that women are rarely found to be doing any of the exorcizing. This is true even in the cases of possessions where the “victims” are all female. This is striking, as there is “so much evidence that women regularly performed magical rituals and spells designed to protect or heal.”<sup>117</sup> This would be theme that would seem to continue on through early Christianity, as exorcisms were done predominantly by men.

The daimon had a large role in erotic and love magic. This shows the daimon’s role as a helpmate which could be summoned by a practitioner of magic in order to help achieve his or her ends. It is also relevant to note that, perhaps in order to deter individuals from participating in magical practices, magic was given a gendered attitude in that it was not only mostly women who were examples of the “victims” of magic in practice, but also that in literature magic was overtly feminized: by saying that it was part of the realm of women, perhaps the authors hope that this would be a deterrent to any

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<sup>115</sup> Faraone, “Demon Womb”, 157

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 158

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, 162

men who might be thinking of dabbling in magic. In the examples of magic, and the examples that are shown next, one of the most significant things to remember is that these spells and incantations were used for a practitioner of magic to achieve his or her ends, it is the *intent* of the magician that counts, as opposed to the action of the daimon.

### **The Daimon in Incantation and Amulet**

There are other examples of spells and incantations that were used in the ancient world in addition to the other love spells and erotic magic. These can be found in texts like *The Greek Magical Papyri*, which contain various spells, as well as the *Cyranides*, which were recipes for amulets against various maladies. Through these examples, one can see evidence of the daimon pervading everyday life. While they may not have been authored by well-known individuals, such as Homer or Hesiod, it shows how these ideas of deities and daimones reached down to the individual level. The daimon was not something that was relegated to the poems and prose of those popular authors of the fantastic or the philosophical that are still well known today.

*The Greek Magical Papyri* is a collection of spells and curses that have been subsequently translated.<sup>118</sup> These fascinating sources show not only what items are necessary and the way they are to be used in order to perform a spell, but also the incantation that is to be spoken during that spell-work. In this text alone there are ten explicit instances of spells used to either ward off daimones, or to invoke them to be used as an assistant of sorts. It should be noted that the spells in this translation range “mainly

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<sup>118</sup> To make things more clear, in instances when the spell is labeled as PGM, it stands for *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, and the roman numerals which occur after represent the different papyrus manuscript on which is was found; according to Hans Dieter Betz’s “Explanation of References and Textual Signs” in the *Greek Magical Papyri*

from the second century B.C. to the fifth century A.D.” and “represents only a small number of all the magical spells that once existed.”<sup>119</sup> One cannot be sure that these spells and incantations existed earlier, and that there are no more concerning the daimon. That being said, it is interesting to note that the surviving incantations in which one can summon a daimon, or ward one off, occur during the second century B.C., after the shift in the fourth century B.C.

The first example, PGM I. 1-42, concerns gaining a daimon as a helpmate. The outcome of the rite is that “a [daimon comes] as an assistant who will reveal everything to you clearly and will be your [companion and] will eat and sleep with you.”<sup>120</sup> This spell seems to be akin to what Winkler had discussed, in the sense that the daimon could be invoked as a helper, to do the bidding of the *magus* who had performed the spell. The list of items needed to perform the spell, which makes it seem to be quite an undertaking, is as follows: “...two of your own fingernails and all the hairs [from] your head, and take a Circaean falcon / and deify it in the [milk] of a black [cow] after you have mixed attic honey with the milk.”<sup>121</sup> One then must go on to placing the items and then recite this spell:

“...come to me Good Husbandman...come to me, o Holy Orion, [you who lie] in the north, / who cause [the] currents of [the] Nile to roll down and mingle with the sea...who are young in the morning and [old in the evening], who journey through the Subterranean sphere and [rise]. Breathing fire...[this] is your authoritative name: ARBATH ABAOTH BAKCHABRE.”<sup>122</sup>

This spell in particular is important as it invokes a daimon by giving it a name. To know the name of an entity could mean power over it. It is also interesting to note the location of this spell. That it is on the first manuscript of the *Papyri Graecae Magicae*

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<sup>119</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, ed. *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), xi

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, 3

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, 3

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 4



seems to denote popularity or perhaps the importance of having an invocation that could call upon an otherworldly spirit as an assistant. In this case, the daimon in question would “reveal everything clearly”, which is a theme in many of the other spells and amulets as well. That there is an implication that the daimon held knowledge unbeknownst to the *magus* is a noteworthy idea.

PGM I. 42-195 is another example of a spell for acquiring one’s own daimon. What is interesting about this incantation is that it not only gives the entirety of the spell, but also tells the spell-caster exactly what this daimonic assistant is capable of doing. This is something that is not necessarily found in others. The spoken spell itself is not translatable, but the actions taken to acquire the daimon are. It says that: “after the preliminary purification / [abstain from animal food] and from all uncleanness and, on whatever [night] you want to, go [up] onto a lofty roof after you have clothe yourself in a pure garment...[and say] the first spell of the encounter as the sun’s orb is disappearing.”<sup>123</sup>

Once this has been done, it says that there will be two signs for the spell-caster: “a falcon will [fly down and] stand in front of [you], and after flapping its wings in mid-air and [dropping] an oblong stone, it will immediately take flight and [ascend] to heaven.”<sup>124</sup> The second sign is that, “[a blazing star] will descend and come to a stop in the middle / of the housetop, and when the star [has dissolved] before your eyes, you will behold the [messenger] whom you have summoned...”<sup>125</sup> This seems to take effect almost immediately, and once encountering this messenger, one is to say, “I shall have

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid, 4

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 5

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 5

you as a friendly assistant, a beneficent god who serves me whenever I say, ‘Quickly, by your / power now appear on earth to me, yay verily, god!’”<sup>126</sup>

That this daimon is supposedly a pleasant assistant to the spell-caster does not seem to denote any idea of it being a truly evil entity. Nor does it imply that the daimon might have some sort of negative hold over them, or sway the spell-caster in any way. It says that “he sends dreams...he kills, he destroys, he stirs up winds from the earth...” and while this might seem to imply that the daimon can surely do “evil” deeds, this would be left up to the intentions of its “master”.<sup>127</sup> Upon further reflection on this point, if the daimon itself was just a lower form of the gods themselves, then were they not really acting much like the gods and goddesses of the ancient Greek world did? That being said, the Greek pantheon itself could hold very human characteristics, and do both “good” and “bad”, they were inherently neither.

In PGM VII. 505-28, is another example of meeting with one’s own daimon. The spell begins by saying

“Hail, Tyche, and you, the daimon of this place, and you, the present hour, and you, the present day – and every day as well. Hail, Universe, that is, earth and heaven. Hail, Helios, for you are the one who has established yourself in invisible light over the holy firmament / ORKORETHARA”<sup>128</sup>

After all of this hailing, it goes on to bring in many other secret names, and finally gives the directions as to what one must do after saying this spell. One must “Write the name in myrrh ink on two male eggs,” and then cleanse themselves with one of these eggs before breaking it and throwing it away; with the other one must “speak the formula 7 times, crack the egg open, and swallow its contents.”<sup>129</sup> Again, however, there is nothing

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 5

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 5

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, 132

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, 132

negative mentioned about the entity that one is calling upon. This is merely a way to make contact with, and gain the daimon as a helper.

In the final example, from *The Greek Magical Papyri*, PGM LXXXIX. 1-27, is the case of a spell to rid one of supposed possession by a daimon. It is important to note here that the spell more than likely came from a later period, as it is one that explicitly deals with the exorcism of a daimon. The exorcism of a daimon found in Greco-Roman texts more than likely derived from Jewish culture, and is heavily influenced by early Christian ideologies, because there are no real examples of exorcism prior to influence with these cultures. In referring to exorcism, there are five important parameters to keep in mind: (1). “the demon is ordered out but does not initially obey”; (2). “the demon is ordered out once more, again, with terrible threats, and does obey”; (3). “often the demon is adjured in the name of a particularly powerful sorcerer”, usually Jesus, Solomon, or Moses; (4). “the demon is made to confess its name and identity, and this act is often in itself tantamount to expulsion: confirming the presence of a demon is more than half the battle”; (5). “the demon gives a physical token of its departure: either it is visible as it departs, usually in the form of a dark figure, or it is made to knock over an external object on its outward flight.”<sup>130</sup>

It seems that this example of an exorcism incantation is to be done in emphatic manner, as the spell itself says, “ABRASAX<sup>131</sup> ABRASICHOOU, help little / Sophia-Priskilla. Get hold of and do away with what comes to little Sophia- / Priskilla, whether it is a shivering fit – get hold of it! Whether a phantom, get hold of it! Whether a daimon –

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<sup>130</sup> Ogden, 167

<sup>131</sup> According to the Jewish Encyclopedia, this was a name given by the Gnostic Basilides to the most high being, which would make sense in a spell used for exorcism.

get hold of it!”<sup>132</sup> Instead of being seen as some sort of magical assistant in the case of Sophia-Priskilla, it seems there was the assumption that she might be possessed by a daimon. Though the spell is rather ambiguous about the cause of her ailment, the daimon was suggested. However, this could mean that one was to assume that someone had *invoked* the daimon personally, in order to possess Sophia-Priskilla, as in the cases that Winkler discusses with erotic and love spells. There is no general feeling of total “evil” in this example of a spell when referring to the daimon; in the cases of those summoning the daimon as an assistant, the importance would be in the *intent* of that spell-caster, as ultimately it is their belief that the daimon is doing *their* bidding. However, with the Judeo-Christian influence, it is likely that this vision of the daimon is evolving.

Another example of an incantation for exorcism with Judeo-Christian influence comes from PGM IV. 3007-86. This spell is one that had been tested by Pibechis, a “legendary magician from Egypt”, and was for those “possessed by daimons.”<sup>133</sup> The phylactery itself says: “On a tin lamella write / “IAEO ABRAOTH IOCH PHTHA MESENPSIN IAO PHEOCH IAEI CHAROK,” and hang it on the patient. It is terrifying to every daimon, a thing he fears.”<sup>134</sup> The conjuration refers to Jesus, and continues by saying:

““I conjure you by the god of the Hebrews,/ Jesus, IABA IAE ABRAOTH AIA THOTH ELE ELO AEO EOY IIIBAECH ABARMAS IABAROU ABELBEL LONE ABRA MAROIA BRAKION, who appears in fire, who is in the midst of land, snow, and fog, TANNETIS; let your / angel, the implacable, descend and let him assign the daimon flying around this form, which god formed in his holy paradise, because I pray to the holy god...”<sup>135</sup>

The conjuration keeps going, and ends by saying “I conjure you, every daimonic spirit, by the one who oversees the earth and makes its foundations tremble, [the one] who made

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<sup>132</sup> Betz, 302

<sup>133</sup> Betz, 96

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 96

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 96

all things which are not into that which is”, after which, it instructs the daimoniac “not to eat pork, and every spirit and daimon, whatever sort it may be, will be subject to you.”<sup>136</sup>

There is a great deal of reference to Judeo-Christian ideology in this spell, even as it came from an Egyptian magician. The fact that Jesus is referenced in order to adjure the daimon itself and the person is instructed not to eat pork in order to keep the daimones away shows the influence that Christianity had over these exorcistic spells. Even if the practitioner did not necessarily believe in Christian teachings, it is clear that Jesus was thought of as a powerful figure, and thus would be able to influence the exorcism of a possessed individual.

Upon looking at the *Greek Magical Papyri*, it is important to note the differences in these examples. In earlier manuscripts, the spells concerning the invocation of a daimon as an assistant, and the later phylacteries against possession by a daimon perhaps denote a shift in ideas of “good” and “evil”. They might also, however, merely show a realization that there were those who *did* attempt to summon otherworldly assistants and thus are a reaction to that. It is very difficult to look at antiquity and at the daimon and actually ascribe a category of “good” or of “evil” as, like mentioned earlier, the Greek pantheon was a mixture of both. Unlike the Abrahamic “god”, these gods and goddesses were neither inherently “good” nor “bad”, and thus those categories had very different meanings than they do now, or did with the rise of Christianity.

The *Cyranides* are a grouping of incantations and spells for amulets that were collected and translated into *Amulet and Alphabet*, and were somewhat magical and somewhat medicinal in nature. They too have a lot to say about the daimon as well. Each amulet and incantation is attributed to a different letter in the Greek alphabet, and it dates

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid, 97

back to about the fourth century A.D. It was purportedly put together by many different individuals over a long course of time, but was compiled around one central them by Harpocration of Alexandria in the fourth century.<sup>137</sup> The association of each Greek letter to the amulet was supposedly what gave them their power, and this was done in accordance with the apparent revelations of Hermes Trismegistus.<sup>138</sup>

The first example is attributed to Epsilon, and is an amulet which is devoted to being loved. Not only do these provide the outcome, but each amulet is given an exact list of items needed in order for it to work. For this Epsilon amulet, one would need a euanthes stone, and:

“In the euanthes stone, the all-golden, Aphrodite is engraved binding up her hair and the locks on her head, and a root of the plant and a nightingale’s tongue are put underneath. Wear it after setting. And you will be loved by everybody and you will be well-known and seem sweet-voiced not only to human beings but also to gods and demons. Every wild animal will flee you.”<sup>139</sup>

It is interesting to note that this amulet would supposedly not just have an effect upon human beings, but even upon the gods and daimones. The translation itself even says that this amulet has nothing to do with “fecundity, but is meant as a love spell working on gods and demons as well as on human beings.”<sup>140</sup> This would seem to be important as it implies that the gods and daimones are not only susceptible to these spells, but that their behavior is ambiguous in nature. It does not explicitly say that this spell is performed because of their “evil” or “dangerous” natures, just that the spell-caster intends to be loved and well-known by even the deities.

Another example uses what is called a Nemesis stone, and it is apparently:

“...a stone removed from a Nemesis altar. The stone Nemesis is engraved standing with her foot on a wheel. She is pictured as a maiden, holding a cubit-rule in her left hand and a wand in her right hand.

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<sup>137</sup>Ogden 275

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, 275

<sup>139</sup> Maryse Waegeman, *Amulet and Alphabet: Magical Amulets in the First Book of Cyranides*, (Brill Academic Publishers, 1987), 41

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, 42

You will enclose under the stone a duck's wing tip and a bit of the plant [mullein]. If you then present this ring to a possessed man, the demon will immediately admit his presence and flee. It also cures the moonstruck if worn around the neck. It also averts demonic phantasies in dreams, children's frightfulness and nightmares. The wearer must desist from every foul thing. If this ring is worn it reveals the number of years on your life and the nature and place of your death. The wearer must desist from every bad thing."<sup>141</sup>

The translation says that because Nemesis is "a goddess who conquers...evil" it is easy to see why she would be attributed to "an amulet meant to drive away evil demons of any kind."<sup>142</sup> Another reason why Nemesis might be used in this amulet is that she is associated with punishing "those who exceed the measure, hence her cubit ruler."<sup>143</sup> The plant mullein is supposedly also known as the "death plant", and could be used to ward off daimones, especially those daimones associated with the dead.<sup>144</sup> This is interesting as it is definitely an amulet meant to be worn to ward off daimones from those possessed, but again, were these possessions by an "evil" daimon? Or were they possessions by a daimonic assistant sent by a practitioner of magic? While the book of *Cyranides* itself dates back to the fourth century A.D., when there was already a difference between the angelic and the demonic, these were amulets and incantations that had been collected over time, so it is difficult to surmise.

These examples of spells and incantations show how the thoughts of daimones evolved even in the later periods of antiquity. They show how the daimon was at some points thought of as being a divine assistant of sorts that could aid a spell-caster in his endeavors. Again, this does not denote any sort of "evil" ideas. At this point the daimon would have been doing the bidding of the magician, and the actions would be based upon the magician's own intent. These also illustrate early forms of exorcism. What is important is that in most of these cases, the fact that there is an exorcism at all comes

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 105

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, 105

<sup>143</sup> Ogden, 279

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, 279

from the fact that the spell shows contact was made with Abrahamic notions of “good” and “evil”, especially so in the case of ABRAXAS. The next chapter discusses where the most significant change of the daimon comes in, with the rise of monotheistic religion. It takes into account the previous history of the daimon, and looks at how Judaism and Christianity played the most important role in shaping how we see the *demon* today.



## Chapter 4. The Daimon and Monotheism

### Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Biblical Text

This idea of a daimon dangerous enough to warrant exorcism was not something that was inherent to Greek or Roman society. As illustrated before, the daimon had been a neutral force or entity up until the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. After it evolved into something with a more dangerous side to it after this period, it was still not seen as something that would *possess*, doing the bidding of an evil godlike entity. Most spells and incantations, and the examples that remain of them, show the daimon as a helpmate doing the bidding of a magician. According to Eric Sorenson in his *Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament and Early Christianity*, exorcism was not a common occurrence in Greco-Roman society even during the early periods of Christianity.<sup>145</sup> Exorcism itself was not even documented in writing until well into the first century CE, and many in Greco-Roman society treated those who performed exorcism with great disdain, believing them to be “fraudulent entrepreneurs in a superstitious world.”<sup>146</sup>

The importance of the disdain felt towards exorcists is twofold: first, it shows that the daimon did not have a long history up to that point of being thought of as completely evil. Second, it illustrates another important point about magic and religion, the contempt felt for anything that was deemed as “foreign”, which exorcism would have been. Sorenson says that it is not until the second century C.E. that exorcism becomes truly entwined with Christianity because of “Christianity’s demonization of foreign pantheons

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<sup>145</sup> Eric Sorenson, *Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament and Early Christianity*, (Tubingen: J.C.B Mohr, 2002), 2

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, 7-8

and cultures, which was aided by the neutral *daimon* that was made evil by Jewish and Christian writers...”<sup>147</sup>

Unlike the religious world of the Greeks and Romans, the ancient Near East had definite ideas of “good” and “evil” in their religious culture. While Mesopotamian societies may not have believe in possession by a demon per se, they still had those in their ranks of priests that would be equivalent to what would be known as an exorcist.<sup>148</sup> In Zoroastrianism, there was already an idea of ethical dualism, and this was present even in the spirit world. For example, the *Udug-hul* or “Evil Demons” was a composition of rituals against demons and the spell-casters who called upon them. While there are examples of Greek spell-casters calling upon daimones, the entities there are not explicitly thought of as evil, as they are labeled here. These incantations were used to “restore cosmic order”, but not because of any wrongdoings by humans, because of something evil that had happened in the spirit world.<sup>149</sup> Due to these ideas of dualism, there may have been some influence on Jewish ideas concerning angels and demons.

Traditional Judaism and the Old Testament do not really have many examples of possession by daimones, though there is a definite fear of witchcraft or black magic. These ideas, however, varied among rabbinical sources. There is one definite instance of possession in First Samuel 16:14, however, though it does not provide much insight into Jewish beliefs about daimones. It states that “the spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.”<sup>150</sup> With this case of possession, though, it seems as though the evil spirit that caused the possessing had been sent from “God”,

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 15

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, 21

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, 25-26

<sup>150</sup> I Samuel 16:14, New International Version

which would indicate that at this point of early Jewish thought, daimones or demons were under the control of one entity, that being the Jewish God. In other cases concerning demons in the Old Testament, it seems as though they were examples of demonized gods or spirits from what the Jewish people considered other idolatrous beliefs.

Jewish tradition itself provided a starting point in the evolution of daimon to demon, and this came in the non-canonical Book of Enoch. In Valerie Flint's article "The Demonisation of Magic and Sorcery in Late Antiquity: Christian Redefinitions of Pagan Religions", there is great detail. With the shift to monotheistic religion, she says that there was no longer blind acceptance of there being a good daimon, or its semi-godlike character. Flint brings up one of the earliest examples of this shift in the Book of Enoch, which illustrates the daimon as actually being a *fallen angel*. In the passage she speaks of, a group of fallen angels took human women as their wives, and God thus punished them by making the "offspring...born of the fallen union to continue the wrong-doing as evil spirits on earth."<sup>151</sup> Now there is a definite sense of the daimon as an evil creature; this entity was no longer something to be invoked in aid, it was something to be feared. Flint says that the demons now are "always evil, and help to illustrate a hierarchy of evil so clearly...there is in the Jewish demon a sense of menace hard to equal in other sources..."<sup>152</sup> There is, however, a survival of the "good" daimon, which is in the form of the angel.

In order for "magic" to become something truly evil, Flint says that there are two necessary streams of thought. First, "demons must be viewed as un-ambivalently

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<sup>151</sup> Valerie Flint, "The Demonisation of Magic and Sorcery in Late Antiquity: Christian Redefinitions of Pagan Religions," in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 293

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid*, 294

wicked,” there can no longer be a “good” daimon; if it is good, it would be considered an angel.<sup>153</sup> Secondly, she infers that “magic” must be associated strongly with those demons: “Magic [must be] proscribed, and its practitioners allotted dreadful penalties.”<sup>154</sup> Thus, the demonization of the daimon and magic seem to go hand in hand. As seen earlier, the daimon was an important part of ancient magical spells and incantations, so to have that entity become something truly evil would only aid in making the practice of magic something that would also be evil to Judaism and Christianity, even if their practices could be seen as similar.

Solomon Nigosian also discusses exorcism in Judaism. He says that demons were at their most powerful during the night, and that it was the desert and other places containing ruins where they were thought to be most active.<sup>155</sup> An interesting tie to the Greco-Roman ideas of the daimon comes from the supposed “guilt offering” to the demon ‘Azazel. According to Nigosian, the desert area of ancient Palestine was thought to be the home of ‘Azazel, and when they would make a sacrifice of a goat to YHWH, the Jewish God, they would also make a sacrifice to ‘Azazel.<sup>156</sup> This guilt offering seems to be very much akin to the offerings given to the house daimons, or *lares* and *genius*, of ancient Greece and Rome. He says, also, that “various misfortunes and pathological conditions, including plagues and diseases, were attributed to evil spirits or demonic beings”, which is similar to the personifications that the daimon took on in antiquity, but also shows the path in which the evolution of the demon would finally take.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid, 295

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, 295

<sup>155</sup> Nigosian, 32

<sup>156</sup> Ibid, 32

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, 33

The use of daimones to influence dreams is something that was prevalent in Greco-Roman magical practice, and something that early Christianity taught was a practice to be feared. Early Christians were appalled by the practice of pagan oneiromancy, or dream interpretation and use, even though they themselves often benefited from the practice. As they demonized local sorcerers and their practices, the daimon's origin evolved as well. To early Christians and Jews, "evil daemons were invented to beguile the weak and subjugate them to their power."<sup>158</sup> It seems that they also played upon the idea that the daimon was in a category below the gods, as the apostle Peter claimed that the "evil" daimones, now referred to as demons, would enter one's dreams by assuming "the likeness of gods, in order to receive the adoration and offerings accruing to those same gods."<sup>159</sup> Due to these views on the interference in dreams by demons, the practice of oneiromancy would be one that would be quite contested throughout early and medieval Christianity.

Josephus, the Romano-Jewish historian, gives a great example of exorcism in his *Antiquities of the Jews*. He recounts the powers that God had given to Solomon, especially when it came to exorcism: "God also enabled him to learn that skill which expels demons, which is a science useful and sanative to men." And that "he left behind him the manner of using exorcisms, by which they drive away demons, so that they never return."<sup>160</sup> Josephus goes on to say that these are forms of exorcism that were still used in his day, that he had actually witnessed a man named Eleazar performing an exorcism as well. Josephus says that Eleazar was found to be "releasing people that were demoniacal

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<sup>158</sup> Samson Eitrem, "Dreams and Divination in Magical Ritual", in *Magika Heira: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, ed. Christopher A. Faraone, Dirk Obbink, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 182

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, 182

<sup>160</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 45

in the presence of Vespasian,” and that he did this by putting “a ring that had a root of one of those sorts mentioned by Solomon to the nostrils of the demoniac, after which he drew out the demon through his nostrils” and that afterwards, “when the man fell down immediately, he abjured him to return into him no more, making still mention of Solomon, and reciting the incantations which he composed.”<sup>161</sup>

Another reference to the nose and the demonic comes from the “Eighth Book of Moses”, as Moses himself was seen by some to have been a great magician. It says that “If you say the Name to a demoniac while putting sulfur and asphalt to his nose, the daimon will speak at once and will go away.”<sup>162</sup> Supposedly the demon, unhappy with what has been presented at the nostrils, can be drawn out after it has admitted its name. Again, to know the name of an entity would be to have power over it, so this is very significant. Once the demon’s name had been discovered, the exorcist could then draw it out, and expel it.

While not always present in the Hebrew Bible, the demon is an existent aspect of the New Testament. There are numerous accounts of possessions by demons throughout the Gospels. One of these first instances in Matthew 4:24. It says that “News about him [Jesus] spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed...”<sup>163</sup> This is significant as it shows the beginning of a tradition in which Jesus, “son” of the Christian God, had the power and the need to drive out these entities that had now been categorized as something evil. There is no longer any real ambiguity about which side of the “spiritual battle” the demon was on.

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 46-47

<sup>162</sup> Betz, 179

<sup>163</sup> Matthew 4:24, New International Version

An interesting part of Jesus' ability to exorcise the demonically possessed comes from the book of Mark. In Mark 1:27-28 it says that the "people were all so amazed that they asked each other, 'what is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.' News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee."<sup>164</sup> It goes on to say in verses 32-34, "that evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was."<sup>165</sup> These verses not only illustrate belief in the reality of demonic possession at this point in time, but also show that with acceptance of this religion came the power to cast out evil. They nicely exemplify the dichotomy of "good" and "evil" that emerged out of early Christianity: the "evil" demons could be cast out by the "good" son of God.

Another example of Christian exorcism, also from Mark, shows the reaction to the costly exercise from the local people. In this occurrence, Jesus goes to see a demoniac, and attempts to exorcise him. He is then introduced to the daimon. Upon casting him out, the demon says "In God's name, don't torture me!" to which, Jesus asks for the daimon's name.<sup>166</sup> The demon says that his name is "'Legion' ... 'for we are many'", and begs to remain in the land and not be cast out.<sup>167</sup> Instead of casting the demons directly out of the demoniac, he gives them permission to be transferred into a herd of nearby pigs. After this occurs, the pigs subsequently run into a river and drown.<sup>168</sup> Needless to say, the

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<sup>164</sup> Mark 1:27-28, New International Version

<sup>165</sup> Mark 1:32-34, New International Version

<sup>166</sup> Mark 5:7, New International Version

<sup>167</sup> Mark 5:9-10, New International Version

<sup>168</sup> Mark 5:13, New International Version

townspeople are less than pleased that all of their pigs have been killed and beg for Jesus to leave their area.

Those who may have been demonically possessed were not always thrilled to have exorcisms performed on them, especially if it involved the clashing of cultures. Another example of this comes from Acts, where a young girl who had a spirit inside of her is exorcised by the apostle Paul. It says that one day Paul and Silas were walking to their place of prayer, and encountered “a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling.”<sup>169</sup> She began to follow them around and proclaim that they were there to proselytize, and according to the text Paul became so irritated with this that he cast the spirit out. This angered her owners, and they brought Paul and Silas before the magistrates, saying that ““these men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.””<sup>170</sup>

Something that is significant when it comes to exorcism in antiquity is the fact that Judaism and Christianity, while both taking part in certain exorcising practices, had their own powerful figures to reference that reflected their faith. Just as Eleazar called upon Solomon in his exorcism, and Paul called upon Jesus, there are examples in Biblical texts where an exorcism could not be followed through due to some sort of spiritual discrepancy. In Acts comes the fateful example of several Jews who attempted to exorcise in the name of Jesus, though they were not his followers themselves. It says that they would go around “driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, ‘in the name of the Jesus whom

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<sup>169</sup> Acts 16:16, New International Version

<sup>170</sup> Acts 16:20-21, New International Version



Paul preaches, I command you to come out.”<sup>171</sup> Unfortunately for these exorcists, the demon did not leave its host. On the contrary, it asked who exactly they were and then “gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.” This gave Jesus’ name a boost in popularity, and also shows the idea of the importance of remaining within the confines of one’s own faith when exorcising a demoniac.

### **The Daimon and Christianity**

While the greatest change in the evolution of the daimon occurred in the early appearances of Abrahamic religion, in the early modern and medieval periods of Europe, changes were still taking place. It was during this time that ideas of the role of Satan were also evolving, which would subsequently have effects on the demon and demonic possession. Valerie Flint moved her study into other periods of Christian history as well, and she discusses a new importance to demonology: that there was a war to be fought between Christians and the Devil (along with the Devil’s cohort). Within the centuries of early Christianity came a much stronger idea of the possession of humans by demons, and the demon was no associated with pagan religions. Flint says that “the evil demons are now everywhere... They permeate the heavens and the earth, seeking to entrap and seduce by whatever means they can...” one of those means being magic, and the allure that it may have had.<sup>172</sup>

Consistent with this idea of a “heavenly battle”, Diana Lynn Walzel in her “Sources of Medieval Demonology”, says that as “the Church is the Body of Christ, the

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<sup>171</sup> Acts 19: 13, New International Version

<sup>172</sup> Flint, 297

Church is a participant in the warfare against the malignant demon forces.”<sup>173</sup> Walzel realizes the importance that demons and demonology had on the early Church saying that it had been “forced to take a stance on demonism because of the Hellenistic world’s preoccupation with the demonic, “that this had “compelled Christians to form an attitude towards the demonic...”<sup>174</sup> Now that Christianity had become involved with the demonic, the fear of a heavenly battle became very strong; this was especially the case as the demon had been associated with the more earthly, chthonic realms, taking on personifications of lust, hope, fear etc. These were exactly the things that Christianity was trying to fight against. According to this thought, the battle was not something to be fought on the physical plane. This battle was purely otherworldly and the weapons involved, “against the demonic forces [were] spiritual – salvation, faith, truth, righteousness, the Spirit, the word of God, and prayer.”<sup>175</sup> The most important aspect of this battle was thT Jesus would always triumph over the evil demon.

One of the ways in which the early Church was able to triumph over the evils of Satan and his demons was in the conversion of pagan groups. The extent to which disease played a role in the spread of Christianity is significant. With later adaptations of Christianity came the view that Satan himself ruled over evil, thus everything that had a malignant effect would be considered “demonized”, including disease. As Satan “and his cohort were identified and exposed as the efficient cause of both psychological disorder,” thus “by exorcising demons and disease, and by bestowing this power on his apostles and later clerics, Jesus provided a means by which late antique peoples could wage war upon

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<sup>173</sup> Diana Lynn Walzel, “Sources of Medieval Demonology,” in *Articles on Witchcraft, Magic and Demonology: Witchcraft in the Ancient World and the Middle Ages* ed. Brian P. Levack, (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1992), 89

<sup>174</sup> Ibid, 94

<sup>175</sup> Ibid, 89

Satan.”<sup>176</sup> If Christian groups were able to provide aid to the sick, it could be seen as a form of exorcism against Satan and his demons, thus showing Jesus’ power over these things. Augustine’s work *On the Divination of Demons* actually encouraged the idea that demons, “often induced diseases by rendering the air unwholesome.”<sup>177</sup>

As in the ancient world, talismans were employed in order to be rid of disease. These were not overtly imbued with magic, however, but were instead made to be the sacraments of the Eucharist and Confession, which “were perceived as a kind of magical talisman against evil spirits, sickness, and death.”<sup>178</sup> This concept is important as Christ himself was seen as a healer. The metaphor of disease and the actions of Christ as healer is significant to the idea of spiritual warfare; if Christianity could cure diseases that perhaps were unable to be healed in certain societies, this would lend the faith credibility when it came to the “saving” of souls.

The idea of Christianity’s ability to aid communities in need from disease and demons runs into the idea of Christianity as a form of social welfare. Once having gained the trust in the ability to aid with disease, or being able to rid evil spirits or demons, Christian missionaries would be able to go into a community and persuade them to convert. These “early Christian communities emulated and often supplanted the sociobiological relationships of the family unity” and in “some cases – due to Paul’s call for celibacy- the biological family was abandoned entirely in order to feel closer to God.”<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Daniel T. Reff, *Plagues, Priests & Demons*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 67

<sup>177</sup> Ibid, 68

<sup>178</sup> Ibid, 69

<sup>179</sup> Ibid, 77

Celibacy and the demonic is a topic that is present also in the work of David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk*. He says that in this context, “demonology – not just theoretical explorations of the nature and activities of demons, but also the transmission of vivid stories about their attacks on people – is an activity of literate, educated persons who often use demons to address pressing intellectual problems.”<sup>180</sup> This concept is important as it shows that in some cases the demon was starting to be used allegorically - that it would represent the various issues of the time as opposed to being something considered to be literal and existent. Brakke sees the demon as having evolved into a representation of temptations towards monks at that period. For example, he says that fornication is the “most highly visual of the demons,” and that while “love of money may not be as fierce a demon as fornication...its tricks are subtler, and if successful it opens the door to other vices.”<sup>181</sup> Here one can see an interesting similarity from the daimones of antiquity being representative of feelings, to the demons now being representative of what to Christian monks was temptation.

These temptations were dangerous to a monk with such an ascetic lifestyle. Again, the battle of Christianity would be fought on a spiritual plane, thus there would be a problem if one was to succumb to such enticements. Brakke says that, “possessions weigh the monk down, tying him to the material world...preventing him from ascending to heavenly realities...”<sup>182</sup> He states also, the important point that the “monk who chooses an austere lifestyle does not escape this demon, but only forces it to act more

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<sup>180</sup> David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006), 9

<sup>181</sup> Ibid, 59-60

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, 61

creatively.”<sup>183</sup> Thus, not just living simply could keep one safe from the temptations of Satan and his demonic cohort. One must always be watchful of the creative lures used. Brakke says that another important aspect of this spiritual warfare is that combat for these monks did not cease with death; on the contrary, “demons would be present as adversaries at the monk’s death and even the final judgment.”<sup>184</sup> They would act as hindrances in the monk’s attempt to ascend to heaven. He states that “numerous stories make clear that resistance to demons and temptations was the only path to true virtue and thus to salvation...”<sup>185</sup>

By personifying these temptations and lures in a way that would relate them to the demonic, the spiritual battle would be fought in a more earthly realm as well. The supposed victories, however, would take place in the otherworldly planes. If one could resist these attractions, one could be in a sense “saved”. Brakke concludes with the idea that perhaps the struggle that monks had with demons could be attributed to “a persistent and divinely planned conflict within [themselves].”<sup>186</sup> This could be an indication, possibly, of the future of the less overtly combative, more introverted picture of the monk.

These personifications were similar to that of the non-Christian daimon. However, instead of encompassing all emotions the focus is on that of actions and feelings that were deemed “bad” by the Church, these were made to be *demons*, and the likes of St. Augustine would write about their existence and danger. Significantly, it is Augustine who has provided one of the most significant changes to the nature of the daimon. In his

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid, 61

<sup>184</sup> Ibid, 155

<sup>185</sup> Ibid, 155

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, 244

*De civitate Dei*, or *City of God*, he wrote that demons were actually fallen angels. By doing so, he single-handedly redefined all daimones into *demons*, and “declared that the gods worshiped by pagan Egypt, Greece, and Rome had all been demons who misrepresented themselves to humans.”<sup>187</sup> This turn of events meant that subsequently any form of idolatrous worship would be considered demonic worship. Augustine’s redefining of the daimon into *demon* and his castigation of the pagan gods is the culmination of the evolution of the demon into an evil entity. Here he has taken the entity and officially brought in the aspects of the Old and New Testament that implied the daimon was an “evil” spirit, and made this something canonical. There would be other changes to the nature of the *demon* as ideology about the nature of Satan changed, but this is the point at which there is no irrevocability. From this point on there is no ambiguity about which side of the celestial battle the daimon is on. This is something that would indeed be convenient for witchcraft accusations and fear of demonic possession.

The corporeality of the demon was now a factor that was desperately needed to be proven. In antiquity, the most popular idea would have been that they did have some sort of body, but that it was made from a more ethereal substance, like air. While many may have written on this in the later Hellenistic world, it was the work of Apuleius that Augustine quoted, saying that these demons were “of an animal nature, passive in soul, rational in mind, aerial in body, eternal in time...”<sup>188</sup> When using this certain quote, he used the term “passive” in order to refer to the demon’s ability to suffer, a change that came from the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E, and the Platonic school of thought. The argument for corporeality that could come out of this, is that since demons were *fallen angels*, their bodies had thus become closer to human.

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<sup>187</sup> Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 61

<sup>188</sup> As cited in Stephens, 61

With this ability to suffer, due to the fall of Satan, it could be argued that the demon had gone from ethereal to corporeal. It also helped that the gods of the ancient world were not always depicted as merely spirits; they themselves had physical bodies that could be utilized in the mortal world. Thus, if the demons were now considered to be the pagan gods, then they would have retained those characteristics.

A great deal of speculation concerning demonic copulation and the corporeality of angels and demons came from the apocryphal Book of Tobit. For purposes here, the main part of the story concerns Tobit's son Tobias, the woman Sarah, and the angel Raphael. On the topic of corporeality, the angel Raphael eventually tells Tobias that he was not, in fact really eating or drinking, that it was merely "a vision" that Tobias had seen.<sup>189</sup> In concerning demonic copulation, it does not *explicitly* contain such an act, but Sarah's encumbrance is that the demon of lust, Asmodeus, has killed her first seven husbands before their marriages could be consummated. The demon is still associated with lust, but it does not explicitly act upon this. Instead, the main point of usage for the Book of Tobit by Augustine was that the angel, in fact, did not actually consume anything, which is problematic to proving a physical body.

A unique and significant factor of corporeality in medieval demonic belief is that of demonic copulation, and this would be rife throughout witchcraft accusations. This is something that was not as prevalent within texts concerning daimones in antiquity. Daimones could be used in erotic spells and love magic, but they were the helper, not the actual doer. Demonic copulation, however, is significant because it created a need to *prove* the existence of demons, and prove their corporeal nature. Thus early

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<sup>189</sup> Tobit, 12:19, NRSV

demonologists delved into the daimon lore of Greece and Rome, setting out to insist that those in antiquity also believed in the corporeal and evil nature of demons.

Some historians have argued that the most significant factor in the belief of demons was not actually utilizing the “good” nature of Christianity to prove demonic existence; if there is “good”, there is by default “evil”. In fact, they argue that it was the opposite: that belief in demons and demonic activity would actually have strengthened belief in Christianity and faith in the Church. This plays a large role with the idea of demonic copulation, as it became necessary as time progressed to show that certain individuals *had* had sex with a demon. This was quintessential to things like witchcraft accusations, as well as instances of demonic possession. There were those who would rabidly go after evidence to *prove* that it happened.

Walter Stephens, in his book *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief*, is one of those historians, and the crux of his argument centers around the idea of demonic copulation and the Church’s obsession with sex and the demonic in the Middle Ages. He explains that one of the most significant issues for the Church, was trying to answer the question of corporeality, and that conversations about this were very problematic, and finding a solution was difficult. His argument is that the Church fathers, and other individuals who were of great importance to the Church, may not have been attempting to impose a belief upon the people rather that they “were anxious to convince *themselves*.”<sup>190</sup>

This is an interesting argument, as it attempts to provide further explanation as to the proliferation of texts concerning demons, and the advent of demonology. The very fact that there was a form of theological “science” and study dedicated to the existence

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<sup>190</sup> Stephens, 124



and proving of demons relevant to the daimon's evolution, and shows how later questions of the demon were not necessarily concerning its existence or nature, but just how *evil* this creature could be. It shows that the demon was completely legitimate to fear at this point in time, and by Stephen's argument, if these individuals could prove the how evil these demons could be, consequently it would mean that their faith and beliefs were sound.

It is intriguing to think that church leaders may have used the "evil" demon as something to reinforce what Church fathers may have seen as a waning faith. This is especially so after seeing the evolution of the entity. We can see that with the rising influence of Judaism there are slight changes to the outlook of the daimon. There were those who wrote about exorcisms done by both Solomon and Moses. The Book of Enoch brings forward the fallen angel/daimon Azazel, whose nature and the "fear" of by the ancient Israelites seem akin to that of the house daimones or *genius* of Greece and Rome. In the New Testament there are far more examples of the daimon as a negative entity, but these are easily cast out, and do not seem as "evil" as they would become later. It is with Augustine's *City of God* that there is a more definite, official verdict about the nature of the daimon. Once they were deemed to be fallen angels in the more negative sense, and that all pagan gods were, in fact, demons, there is certain finality to this. The demon had now become a completely evil entity, and there was no retracting from this.

## Chapter 5. Conclusion

The demon is an entity that plays a significant role in both religious and popular culture. A staple of the horror genre of both book and film, its popularity has not waned, and if anything has grown in the past few years. It is not just in the realms of fiction, however, that the demon has managed to keep alive. Demonology was a popular form of science during the Middle Ages, and while it may not be accepted in the sciences today, the fear of demons is still prevalent. The Middle Ages were rife with claims of demonic possession, and while one of the last large scale instances of what could be perceived as claims to demonic possession occurred during the Salem Witch Trials in 1692, exorcisms are still performed all over the world, even today. A good example of this actually comes from Arizona, where the Reverend Bob Larson has constructed a team of teenage exorcists, ready to take on the evil entities wherever they may be.<sup>191</sup>

This thesis has aimed to trace the evolution of the demon, and to provide a different interpretation of the changes than others have in the past. We have seen that in order to understand the daimon's history, it must be thought of in the context of ancient religious and magical practices, and how these terms have come to be defined by modern scholars. I believe that the most important part of these arguments over terminology is that while it may seem as though the two terms encompass nearly the same ideas, they must be seen as at least *somewhat* distinct in order to understand the significance of the daimon's ability to transcend both categories in some cases. The daimon is both something that is worshiped in religious practice - for example the Asclepius cult and the

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<sup>191</sup> This can be seen on his website, <http://www.teenageexorcists.com/>. Larson has also performed many exorcisms of his own, and claims to be a "world renowned exorcist"

Agathos Daimon – and an entity that can be called upon in magical practice. Once the distinction has been made between “religion” and “magic”, and subsequently the connotations of “good” and “evil”, given respectively, the nature of the daimon becomes irrevocably changed. It is also necessary to understand the importance of public versus private ritual practice to those in antiquity, as those distinctions would become far more concrete also, and would have an effect upon how the daimon would be seen in religious practices.

This thesis posits the following evolution in the concept of the daimon: it goes from being thought of as an action, or perhaps a state – that of being *between* things, to an entity in its own right. While Hesiod brings about the first ideas of the daimon as a *being*, it still retains that idea of the “between”, as its nature then is to act as an intermediary between the realms of the human and the divine. After being thought of as an actual entity, its nature began to change. This is where most historians say that the most major change to the daimon comes, (if they have not instead conflated the ideas of the daimon and the gods or ghosts) as new features were ascribed to the daimon. While it is very significant that Xenocrates and his contemporaries attributed more human characteristics to the daimon, I do not believe that this makes it the truly “evil” being that we know of today. If what makes the daimon inherently “evil” is the fact that Xenocrates claimed it had the ability to suffer as humans do, then what are the implications of that on humanity? I see this as a change necessary for the subsequent evolving to occur, but also that if the daimon still held this nature of being *between*, then it makes sense for it to have some human qualities. This does not, I feel, make it the most important of modifications to the nature of the daimon.

The sources used that are spells and incantations also seem to follow along with these ideas. Those earlier examples of erotic magic and love spells do not give any indication that the daimon is itself an “evil” entity. With these examples, it appears that the daimon merely acted upon the intent of the spell-caster. Thus, the daimon was not at fault for performing the spell, it was just the intermediary between the caster and the victim. If the spell or incantation was something considered to be “bad”, it was the intent of the magician, not the nature of the daimon that made it so, and the opposite would be true as well. The daimon of magical usage seems to be neutral in character. The later spells, which would come after interaction with Judaism and Christianity, show the daimon as both a helper and something that might have the ability to possess. It is still hard to ascertain, however, if the possessing was done at the behest of a magician, or by the daimon’s own intent. Even with the amulets used for exorcism, it is still difficult to understand what the daimon’s role might have been.

After looking at Biblical sources, it is easy to see the daimon turning into something that would not be neutral. While the Old Testament does not hold much evidence of daimones, there are still examples of Solomon and Moses being exorcists of sorts.<sup>192</sup> Again, the Book of Enoch shows a daimon or *demon* that looks only slightly less benign and trickster-like than the house daimones and *genii* of ancient Greece and Rome. The New Testament brings forward a more demonic sort of entity, but again, it still seems to be more easily exorcised by Jesus and his disciples than other examples of later demonic possession. Even in early Christianity, the demonic seem to be personifications of temptation, or things that have negative influence that cannot be fully explained, for example disease or drought. It is only with the writing of Augustine of Hippo that this

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<sup>192</sup> Josephus, 45-47

evolution seems to culminate in a way that is more finite than the others. Augustine's *City of God* gives irrevocability to his argument, and by declaring that "the gods worshiped by pagan Egypt, Greece, and Rome had all been demons who misrepresented themselves to humans", he removes the neutrality that the daimon had had in the past, as well as the credibility of those who engaged in magical or religious practices with the daimonic.<sup>193</sup> There is no longer any question of the daimon's intent. If a spell-caster were to call upon a *demon* to do his bidding, there would not be any need to question the purposes behind it. Augustine's ideas about the demonic were very influential to the rest of demonological thought, and would be used by many in the future.

What is significant about the way that Augustine's ideas are used, however, is that subsequent arguments entailed subjects such as the corporeality of demons, or whether or not they could engage in sexual acts with humans. Stephens shows that St. Thomas Aquinas would go on to use *City of God* in order to construct his own ideas of demonic corporeality, and while having written on both demonology *and* angelology, it is clear that there is distinction between the two, and that the daimones of the past are a part of the former category.<sup>194</sup> The nature of the entity is not in question after this; it is associated with Satan and therefore "evil".

The history of the daimon changing from daimon to demon is very significant to the history of religious thought. Many historians of the ancient world pass over the entity in favor of discussion of more major deities, or more popular creatures of myth. If it is discussed, the daimon is usually discussed in conversation with ghosts or combined with the gods, when in fact it should be thought of in its own terms. The demon did not just

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<sup>193</sup> Stephens, 61

<sup>194</sup> Stephens, 67

appear in the western world with the advent of monotheistic religion; it had a long history prior to this, in which it had an entirely different nature and use. It is also important to see the points of change in its evolution, especially what I see as the most meaningful change coming with Augustine. It is difficult to concede that Xenocrates contributed the most significant change in the history of the daimon, when this merely gave it more human qualities. Most historians that actually look at the daimon claim that this is the point that makes it the entity that we think of today, but it seems problematic to assert that being given the ability to feel pleasure and pain made a seemingly neutral entity become something that would be closely aligned with Satan in the Middle Ages.

As the demon is something that is so prevalent in popular culture, even today, it is important to understand the background of the entity. It is just automatically thought that the demon has always been something that was “evil”, and its long and fascinating history is never shared. Instead of immediately thinking of what is presented in films like *The Exorcist*, *Hellraiser*, or any other popular film that showcases the demon, it seems significant to know how it evolved to get to that point. If we have a better understanding of how the daimon evolved over time, perhaps we can gain a better understanding of its place in both the religious and popular culture today.

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